

VALMIKI MAHA RAMAYANA
OR
YOGA VASISHTA

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VALMIKI MAHA RAMAYANA OR YOGA VASISHTA Nirvana - Prakarna INTRODUCTION

The present work forms the sixth section and second volume of the teachings of the great sage Vasishtha as given out by Valmiki and called Maha-Ramayana by him. This volume, based on the Sanskrit edition by the Nirnayasagar Press of Bombay, deals solely with the state of Nirvana and hence the section is called "Nirvana Prakarna".

The first five parts forming the first volume based on the original sanskrit publication was published in Tamil in a condensed form in 1948 by the present writer. This second volume about "Nirvana" is now published in English, also in a condensed form, in order that the work may have a wider appeal.

For the benefit of the readers who are not acquainted with the first volume, we shall briefly indicate what the five sections of the first volume deal with.

Section I. Vairagya Prakarna :

Rama, the hero of Ramayana, had returned from an extensive tour of the country before he reached

the age of sixteen and, as a result of having witnessed sickness and poverty wherever he went, he got sick of worldly life and was in a very despondent mood. While he was in this condition, Viswamitra came to Dasaratha seeking the aid of Rama to keep away the rakshasas from disturbing him during a ten-day long continuous tapas he had undertaken. Seeing however, that Rama was in no condition to undertake such worldly duties, Viswamitra requested Vasishta to instruct the path of Gnana or wisdom to Rama and set his mind in a proper frame.

Section II. Mumutschu Vyavakara Prakarna :

This section deals with the question, "What is God". The results of efforts of mankind attributed to God's intervention are held to be due to one's past karmas. All present activity in the world arises out of past Karmas only. On this basis, this section deals further with the nature of the efforts needed to release oneself from bondage to the objective world and then carry on the duties of life in a detached manner.

Section III. Uthpathi Prakarna :

(The rise of the "Self" Idea)

The nature of the "Self" idea and how it takes its rise are the questions dealt with in this section. The "Self" idea expands itself as the world phenomena and is identical with it. All objects are no more than ideas imagined by the prime or basic idea "Self" and they appear to have form and substance when viewed through the gross sense organs. How bondage arises is also treated in detail.

Section IV. Sthithi Prakarna :

(How the "Self" Idea is sustained)

What brings about a succession of life cycles forms the theme of this section.

Section V. Upasama Prakarna :

The path to be followed for breaking this chain of life cycles and obtaining final release forms the subject of this section.

The substance of the first volume may be briefly stated thus: In the course of the successive life-cycles everyone comes to a stage when, as a result of the repeated experiences of good and evil aspects of life, he feels a sort of general disgust and is anxious to know and understand the purpose of this life, whence born, whither he is drifting, what this world signifies and so forth. This is the starting point of vichara or "Enquiry". Until this state is reached everyone is deeply immersed in the pursuit of pleasures ending in the pains of life. But such activity does not go on for ever as stated already. When the stage of enquiry is reached, one will find this book extremely useful as a guide to his lines of thinking and action.

The enquiry starts with the study of the mind, its operations and its control. Parts III, IV and V deal wholly with these aspects. It establishes that everything in the Universe is an expansion of the "Self" idea. It is the basis from which an external idea arises, without it no thought can arise. A group of such ideas with the inevitable reactions gradually develop into the phenomenon known as "Mind" in man.

Everything in the world exists only as ideas, all objects being only ideas projected externally through the sense organs. The sense organs and the external world are of the same category and appear to have form and substance. What is an idea on one side of the sense organs appears as an object on the other side of them and vice versa. But the sense organs themselves are again perceived only as ideas. Thus the entire objective world, time, space, Law of Causation, are all one form or another of Mind. Mind as object or world phenomena, Mind as Time. Mind as Space constitute the activity known as "Life". These alone are what we perceive and know about and we cannot cognise anything except as a state of Mind.

This is the main theme of the first volume, established with reasoning and illustrated by interesting stories. Beyond establishing these truths about perceptions and reactions and how they are continually sustained by ideas of desire and aversion, the way to break loose from the thralldom of the sense reactions is also amplified with illustrations. Such final release can be obtained only by practising counter-imagination at first so as to neutralise the contrary ideas and, when this has borne fruit by suspending imaginative activity altogether. The cause of renewed existence is then done away with finally. By suspending imaginative activity one is not compelled to lead a life of inaction. Every kind of activity of life may be pursued but without attachment or aversion to it.

The present volume demolishes what was so ably and clearly established in the first volume. After all, the purpose of the first volume was to narrow down

issues and to focus attention to a single all-embracing entity in order to show subsequently the path of Release from that state known as Mind. Release is just a "MIND-LESS" state. In the state of Release, Mind is non-existent and only the activity of Chitta continues, which is not different from dream phenomenon. Mind is not a "Real" entity, because it is evanescent in function and subject to total extinction. We have only two states of existence namely "activity" and "repose". Activity gives rise to perceptual phenomena and repose to Release. These two states alternate each other continually.

One is entitled to ask whether such a method can at all be justified. Yes, it is justifiable because we have to establish Brahman from what we are, from our present state of existence, which is wholly mental activity. It is therefore necessary to study the MIND-Phenomenon first in all its aspects before considering its state of dissolution. Without adopting such a device it is impossible to establish Brahman. No other method can truly serve to establish Brahman and that is also the reason why one does not obtain firm conviction from all other methods. These methods, therefore, have to resort to the authority of the Vedas to carry conviction. But Vasishta has not relied on the authority of the Vedas to establish his position, the reason being that although the Vedas have intuited Brahman and have frequently referred to it, the method of attaining that state has not been clearly discussed and explained. The Vedas deal mostly with Dharma Artha and Kama (Right conduct, wealth and pleasure) pertaining to activity.

Further, it is the Mind-Phenomenon that is the cause of this expanding World Phenomenon and is also at the root of all human activity. At the same time there is another aspect of Mind, namely its state of dissolution, when it is transformed to Chith or pure subtle movement between the Witness or Consciousness and objects. It is the normal state for Jivan-Mukhtas and is within the knowledge of many. From this it is clear that Mind-Phenomena is a temporary state of Chith. Mind phenomenon comes into play either due to vasanas (or unfulfilled desires) or to one's own voluntary efforts. When however there are no past efforts to ripen to fruition and when imaginative activity is suspended and no new efforts are afoot then Mind-phenomenon is not in evidence. Mind then is truly a non-existing principle. It is only an illusory state. It is this that is established in this book.

The Vedas :

Before we continue, a few observations about the origin of the Vedas will not be out of place. It is the common belief, current even among great scholars that the Vedas are the words of God himself and were revealed to Rishis of yore, whose origins are not traceable. This belief can be subscribed to, provided its true significance is understood. In the first place words and language have a human origin and the ideas which they convey must also have human origin. Some call them Revelations and others consider them as human Intuitions. It must in any case be admitted that such Revelations can come only to men of wide experience, deep understanding and as a result of indefatigable and long continued enquiry and

reflection. No one without all these qualifications can ever have had the wisdom of the Vedas revealed to him. At the same time the results of all enquiries, carried out persistently, flash into Consciousness suddenly and unexpectedly. In this sense the Vedas are certainly revealed truths. The Revelations have to be combined with human experience and effort.

As regards the time-less origin associated with the Vedas, we must understand the significance of such a statement appearing in the VEDAS themselves. The Vedas were handed down orally from generation to generation and at the time they were all collected together and codified, the source of all this wisdom was no longer known. That can only mean that all this wisdom emanated from their ancestors who were too distant in time and place and about whom information was not handed down to them or the sources of such information no longer existed. Here we would point out to the masterly exposition of Tilak regarding the Arctic Home of the Vedas. We fully subscribe to it, as that theory alone gives a rational explanation of the statement which is current, namely that the Vedas are of timeless origin and are Revelations. What we said about the human origin of the Vedas is supported also by Vasishtha.

Brahman & Pramanas :

To resume our subject, we should know all about Brahman if we have to transcend the state of Mind phenomenon and attain Nirvana or Absolute Repose. For this we should first establish Brahman. What are the pramanas or valid means of knowledge available

for the purpose of establishing Brahman? The six Darsanas or schools of thought namely Sankhya, Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Yoga, Purva and Uththara Mimamsa respectively have adopted from three to eight valid means of knowledge such as Perception, Inference, Verbal Testimony, Analogy and so forth. But all these pramanas are associated with Mind as the agent and can therefore be applied only to the objective world. But Brahman is a state beyond Mind and so none of the pramanas can serve to establish it.

Brahman & Experience:

Experience is the only pramana that can serve to establish Brahman. This is pratyaksha pramanam and is not to be understood as what is perceptible to the senses. Pratyaksha means pure experience. Brahman can only be experienced and can neither be described nor conceived. When mind subsides completely then alone is Brahman experienced momentarily. Vasishtha then acknowledges experience as the only valid test in connection with Brahman.

Since Brahman is pure experience and the experience of one cannot be imparted to another. Brahman cannot be realised by being taught by others, nor can we establish it by relying on others' experiences. How then to attain that state? It is no doubt a state beyond the reach of most. One in a million may have reached that state, while the rest can only be in the effort to reach that state. But everyone does and must attain that state at some future time, near or remote. Since then Brahman is outside the comprehension of most people and cannot

even be learned from others and since the Vedas have proclaimed that "Verily all this is Brahman!", it is but natural for people to talk of them as having no human origin and that they were words of God. But, as we stated already, the Vedas must have originated from Rishis or Seers, of a bygone age leaving no traces behind. Geological changes on the surface of the Earth must have wiped out all these traces.

Enquiry :

The question then arises whether we should have just blind faith? Not so. What we stated in the foregoing paragraph was with reference to "being" in that state. It is however not necessary to be in that state in order to conduct enquiry about that state. If one is already in that state then enquiry is meaningless. Enquiry is only for those who have not reached that state and it is only enquiry that will ultimately lead to that state. Then, enquiry is conducted with the mind, which everyone has and so everyone, having such leanings is competent to make the enquiry. This leads everyone to a further stage of development according to his experience, intelligence and zeal. Since Brahman is pure experience, and is in fact everything, so every state of attainment is a Brahmic-state. No one can be other than Brahman. No other shastra has this breadth of outlook and vision as the utterance of this great sage Vasishtha.

Brahman & Individual experience :

In the enquiry about Brahman one important attitude has to be kept in mind and if it is not done, no valid conclusions can be arrived at. This attitude pertains to our experience, which was already stated to be the sole pramana valid for enquiry about Brahman.

When we then conduct an enquiry into the nature of Brahman based on one's experience, then it is not proper to mix up other people's simultaneous experiences at that moment. An illustration would make this point clear. When we say that in everyone's experience the illusion of world-phenomena disappears in sleep, it is not right, in counter - argument, to point out that they do not disappear to others who are awake at that time. All arguments must be based on everyone's individual experience only, since no one is governed wholly by another's experience. Our knowledge of our own birth and death is also of a like nature. These two states are not our experiences but only inferences but yet we believe in their truth. Then Brahman must likewise be true for those who are incompetent to experience that state.

Samadhi :

There is quite a lot of confused thinking prevailing over the nature of this state. The truth about it can be explained very simply thus. Samadhi is spoken of with reference to the activity of Chith. At one end the Chith comes to rest in objects or ideas and at the other end in Consciousness. Repeatedly

coming to rest in the object or idea is Samadhi of one sort and it gives rise to intimate knowledge of the object or idea. Then, repeatedly coming to rest in Consciousness gives rise to release from objects and is the path for Liberation. In this state, the Chith is in a state of conscious restraint and the person is fully aware of the external world with heightened senses. This is true Samadhi, in which state, even if the Chith comes in contact with the objective world, no reactions are aroused. It is wrong to think that in the state of true samadhi contact with objects is avoided. It is neither avoided nor courted

Hrudayam : Prana :

The significance of these two expressions, which are extensively used in sanscrit literature pertaining to Yoga, is not correctly conveyed in any of them. They are invariably misrepresented. Hrudayam is not the blood vessel but the brain which forms the thousand headed hood of Adishesha forming the Couch for the Lord Vishnu represented by the Prana or the nervous current flowing up and down the Sushumna (The central canal), which is the basis of the Life Phenomenon. These truths are revealed only in this book.

Brahman :

Brahman is the abiding state in which all beings always rest. Every manifested and unmanifested activity, springs from only this state. Since our minds are wholly engrossed in activity, we lose sight of the moments of repose which is the Brahmic

state. Our minds frequently lapse to this state, but we do not care to take note of it. We cannot but be in the Brahmic state except when the mind is active. Hence no search, no enquiry, no elaborate reasoning and no authority is required to establish Brahman. It is an ever-present experience to everyone who cares to still his mind.

NIRVANA PRAKARNA

PART 1

Valmiki :

The Assembly Hall was packed as usual on the next day and when everyone had taken his seat and was eagerly awaiting to hear the discourse of the great Maharishi, he began to speak.

Vasishta :

Rama ! Are you repeatedly pondering over what I have been discoursing to you hitherto ? Without one's own searching enquiry, he cannot obtain a proper understanding of these great questions. Whatever profession one may be pursuing in his life, there must be the yearning towards Atma always, followed by enquiry.

The substance of what I had said hitherto is that, if the mind has discarded all desires and shed the vasanas and thereby remains in a perfectly clarified state, then it is transformed into pure Intelligence. If this fact is not firmly implanted in your mind, you will not understand anything that is to be said here after. Atma alone is Truth or Reality and there is no second to it. All that is seen or experienced are imaginative creations or ideas, which are pervaded by Chith, since they arise only out of Chith. Hence to know or experience anything else but Chith is impossible.

Those that consider all that exists as Chith and carry on their duties in life are known as Jivan-mukhtas. Since they too are in possession of a physical body and sense-organs, the mind will naturally gravitate towards worldly matters. Yet their minds do not thereby undergo any change, as they are under perfect control. Such men look upon even the overlordship of all the three worlds as a trifle.

The world phenomena is nothing but the expansion of Chith in its state of activity. It is the light of Chith that illumines the world and so the world cannot be different from Chith, just as the scent of a flower is not different from the flower or as heat is not different from fire or cold from ice. Then, what is Chith? It cannot be different from our experience and this again is not different from the "Self" idea, which is otherwise known as Jiva. Jiva can evolve itself only as mind which manifests itself through the sense organs and the body. This body is again identical with the world around us. This goes on as a cycle of identity and all-together they are known as world phenomena.

Akasa can be full of akasa only and Nothingness of nothingness only. In like manner' percepts arising out of the desire to know are only Chith in activity and non-perception its repose. The one appears as many by virtue of our imaginative activity just as one word has varying meanings according to the context.

Samsara - Ignorance :

The sense of duality is the root cause of this darkness known as samsara and it consists in thinking

of the "self" as different from Atma. From this false concept springs many other differentiations, doubt and despair. Ordinarily people consider the body as the "self" as well as the Atma, although it is a source of pain. The Atma is abiding and unchanging while the body is subject to constant change and extinction. The two belong to two wholly different categories and cannot by any means be welded together. There is no sort of relationship between them even temporarily for, in that case, the relationship could continue always. One might then ask whether the body exists without the Atma? No! nothing can exist without the grace of Atma; but it exists without any contact with the body, just as a Witness, without it self undergoing any change. For instance, clouds are formed in the presence of akasa and continue to exist. But, on that score, is there any relationship between the akasa and the clouds?

Desires are the Cause of Ignorance.

The ignorance of men in general is due to their desires, either for wealth or women. Those that are of an enquiring and reflective nature are free from such desires. The mental modifications that result from these desires are the recurring births and deaths. One must realise that the wealth sought for by us comes to us as a test, for no one can continue to be wealthy all the time. Its blessings are short lived and so, if we let our desires grow during this period there is no salvation. Any reflective person would desist from losing his heart over the physical body consisting of skin, bones, flesh and blood. If we only think of the excreta, bad odour etc., which reside in

this body, no one would lose his heart over it. No doubt poets have extolled the beauty of the body and the various organs of pretty women in very attractive terms and people have been misled by such outpourings. But such enjoyments are all momentary. So, if one discards them, as having no abiding value, the mind will acquire equanimity.

The False Concept of Creation - Ignorance :

Ignorance in men arises also out of the false concept of "creation". If we enquire into this, we realise that this entire perceptible universe contains nothing beyond the five fundamental principles and their variants. The course of Nature results in endless births and deaths of plants and animals. There is nothing in it of lasting benefit for one to lose his heart. Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra too are subject to the cycles of creation and destruction. In short, creation is nothing but the manifestation of ignorance.

Rama :

How could Brahma etc. who are worshipped as gods be said to be tainted with ignorance ?

Vasishta :

What is beyond both knowledge and ignorance is only the Atma. If then we begin to talk of the activity of creation or the faculty of acquiring knowledge, then they themselves constitute both prime knowledge and prime ignorance. If then, from this state of aloofness, one turns his attention to the Atma then that is known as Knowledge, but if on

the other hand, one turns towards creation and its ramifications, that is known as ignorance. Waves can appear only on the surface of water and if the waves subside, they appear as water. The seed yields fruits and from fruits one gets again seeds. In the same manner, we slip away from the state of knowledge to ignorance and from ignorance we work up again to a state of knowledge. Thus both these states can be considered only as transitory with reference to Atma. The truth is that only non-existent things appear in contradictory pairs of ideas in manifested life.

Manifestation of Ignorance :

This prime idea may be sub-divided into three classes, namely, subtle, middling and gross. These again are sub-divided into the three gunas (essential nature), namely Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The entire range of creation must come under one of these nine categories.

1. Subtle : 1. Sattwic — Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra.
2. Rajasic — Rishis and Siddhas
3. Tamasic — Nagas and Vidyadharas

The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra will be considered as tainted by ignorance until they are freed from the ideas of existence and non-existence and merge with the Atma. They had risen from the state of human beings by rooting out all ignorance step by step and ultimately they became steeped in knowledge. All that exists, including the trinity, is governed by the ideas of time and place. At the same time they are pervaded by Atma inside and

outside without any contact with them, yet continuing to be the root cause of all these phenomena and finally revealing itself after their dissolution. The relationship of the Atma to the world of perceptions is only that of mere proximity and no more. Clouds cannot form without the presence of akasa, but there is no sort of relationship between the two.

So it is clear that the world-phenomena is unreal. It is the expansion of the act of knowing. This act of knowing is common to plants, animals and human beings and is the fundamental cause of their activity; the activity is manifested through them. These creatures are held in bondage by vasanas (laws of Nature) and so pass through endless birth and deaths without ever a hope of redemption. They are not endowed with the faculty of imagination or mental repose and hence are incapable of striving to free themselves from bondage. They are in eternal bondage being in the grip of total ignorance. It is only the human species that is endowed with a mind, by means of which it acquires positive knowledge of the world, undergoes untold misery and then begins to make serious enquiry and ultimately frees itself from bondage.

This ignorance in us is so deep rooted, having been the result of countless number of births and deaths, that it cannot be easily dispelled. That is the reason why these great truths are repeatedly put before you. But it is not enough that you simply know about these truths; you should repeatedly

ponder over them and act up to them, as only then you will be firm in your faith and knowledge. Whatever may be one's vocation, he should still turn his gaze to the Atma.

There are many illustrious examples of men who, having learned the nature of Atma, were always steeped in the contemplation of the Atma yet carried on the duties that befell them, without a thought to the results.

Janaka, although ruling a vast and mighty Kingdom, is ever rooted in the contemplation of Atma. Why? The mighty God Vishnu is likewise in continuous contemplation, though He now and then descends to the earth and performs ever so many duties devolving on the human species. Brahma, Shiva, the Sun and Moon are continuously doing their duties to the benefit of mankind, but at no instant do they slip away from the contemplation of the Atma. Other great souls like Narada, Pulasthya, Angiras, Brighu, Atri, Suka, Sukracharya, Bhargava and still other Raja-rishis, all of them held on to a great truth with intense faith and performed the duties allotted to them without a blemish.

Rama :

With what central faith did these great souls achieve the status they attained.

Vasishta :

The universe and all its contents are verily Brahman and nothing else. Time, Space, Akasa,

the Sun and the Moon, the Earth, the other world, all are Brahman. It is only Brahman that is realised as Chith, mind, sense organs, activity, results and so forth. All experiences arise because of Brahman. It is Brahman that appears as knowledge as well as ignorance. It is only Brahman that strives from the position of ignorant-Brahman to knowledge-Brahman. The wise as well as the ignorant, animal, plant, everything is Brahman. The body-Brahman suffers decay in the shape of death-Brahman and attains a state of rebirth-Brahman or Atma-Brahman. There is no second thing to Brahman at any time, anywhere. It is gold that takes innumerable shapes as diverse ornaments. It is water that is variously known as ocean, river, waves, fog, vapour and so forth. In all these, the differences are found only in the expressions but the substance is the same. So what we see and experience is the illusion created by the expressions. The expression "I" and "other" are false. Really there is neither "I" nor "Thou". I was never born and I never will die, nor am I going to be born at some future time. All these ideas emanate from ignorance. It is on the basis of this Truth that the great souls are in contentment.

Rama :

Oh! foremost among the Rishis! My mind has achieved tranquility through your discourses; I feel I am competent to become a Jivan Mukhta. Still I have a doubt which I request you to clear. Two paths had been indicated by you to become a Jivan Mukhta, namely the path of Gnana and the path of Yoga.

Which one of them is better and which the easier to practise?

Vasishta :

There is only one path for the purpose, namely the path of Knowledge. The meaning of Yoga and the method of practising it also bears on Knowledge only. But in actual practice, certain differences have arisen. According to usage, the path of Knowledge is said to be that of controlling the mind and attaining to a state of mental calm; whereas the path of Yoga is said to consist in controlling the movement of prana and through it to achieve control of mind. In order to control prana one should steady the breathing first. For this purpose one has to choose a proper time, place, posture and do so many other things besides. With such elaborate arrangements, it is difficult to conceive that mind could be controlled. But, of course, many great men have followed this path. According to us, the path of Knowledge is the best. Still let me tell you what I have heard about the path of Yoga from another great Soul.

The Story of Kaka Bhusunda :

This phenomenal world, akin to a mirage, is stated to have been caused by the first being known as Brahma. I am his son named Vasishta and I am his mental creation. I was for a long time living amidst the starry heavens rotating about the star Dhruva (North Pole star) as a pivot. One day there happened to be a large assembly of Indra's followers in his great hall and I also happened to be

there accidentally. There was one Maharishi by name Sathathapan, who had for a long time been observing the vow of silence and who was narrating on that day about the life of Kaka-Bhusunda, the deathless being. He was said to be living on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru within the hole of a mighty tree that was amidst surroundings that was suffused with a reddish light as from rubies. After the Maharishi had completed the story, I moved out of the assembly and set out in great eagerness to see the eternal Soul.

Having reached my destination, I saw there a mighty tree, which was a world in itself, having as its inhabitants animals, men, Devas, Gandarvas and Kinnaras. In one of its branches, there was a large cave. Inside the cave I saw a large gathering of crows and in their midst their leader who was seated in perfect repose radiating effulgence. While the assembly was watching calmly the face of its leader, I descended into the cave and stood before the leader. Bhusunda who was in Samadhi, sensed my presence in a little while, woke up, welcomed me eagerly and enquired about the object of my visit.

I told him that I had come to learn about his parenatage, birth, present state, how he attained this state and also about the truth of this world of perceptions. To this he replied that he was greatly honoured by my visit and that he was greatly surprised at the questions put to him, since I was already aware of all these. All the same, since I had taken the trouble to come to him and put him these

questions, he said he would tell me everything from beginning to end if I should hear him with patience.

Bhusunda :

Once upon a time, a great festivity was arranged on Mount Kailas, the abode of Paramasiva, when all the Devas as well as the Trinity had gone thither on their respective mounts to participate in the festivity. At the same time, these mounts (Vahanas) too comprising the swans and crows together celebrated the event separately. Having partaken of a lot of alcoholic drinks and not having been in their own conditions, they mixed freely together, with the result that the female swans paired off with male crows and, after the festivities were over, went to their respective abodes.

When the swans reached their abodes, they found themselves to be pregnant and at once reported the fact to their mistress Brahma-Sakthi who, taking pity on the condition of the swans, gave them leave to be away till they were fit enough to carry her. Then she herself went into Samadhi. The swans sought a suitable place of living and in course of time laid eggs and hatched them. One of these swans, crossed by the crow named Chanda, laid 21 eggs and brought out 21 young ones, of which I was one.

When Brahma-Sakthi woke up from Samadhi, she sent for us all, blessed us and taught us the means of obtaining liberation. Then on the advice of our father, we all took our abode here and lived a long time. In course of time, all my younger brothers

attained the state of wisdom and so discarding their physical bodies, liberated themselves. I alone continued to reside here.

Vasishta :

During your long period of existence, you must have witnessed a number of Maha-pralayas. How did you save yourself on these occasions?

Bhusunda :

When this world disappeared, during Maha-pralayas, I too left this abode. When this world was being burnt away by the twelve suns, I identified myself with the principle of fluidity and reached the skies. When Vayu-pralaya overtook this world and powdered the mountains, I identified myself with the principle of solidity and reached the skies. When there was water-pralaya, I identified myself with Vayu and kept myself floating on the waters. After each Kalpa when a fresh creation started, I used to return to this abode of mine.

Vasishta :

But how is it that you escaped with your life, while so many other great men have had to die?

Bhusunda :

Who can withstand the course of Nature, which is identical with Brahman. That was their experience; this is mine.

Note :

The significance of this statement is that since the others believed in destruction during Maha-pralaya that fate overtook them. Bhusunda never believed in annihilation and so continued to exist through all the Maha-pralayas.

Vasishta :

I would like to hear about all the strange happenings that you may have seen during your long existence.

Bhusunda :

Strange things were innumerable. At one time the whole universe was full of mountains and rocks; another time it was all water, still another time it was all forest. I am also aware of a time when there was neither Sun nor Moon and the whole world was plunged in darkness. But such changes have occurred not once but many times. This world had been carried away by the Asura Hiranyaksha three times and thrice had it been rescued by Lord Parameswara in the shape of a wild boar. I also know of the time when the ocean of Milk was churned with the mountain known as Mandaragiri to obtain nectar.

In these recurring creations, I had seen many gnanis like you, such as Narada, Bharadwaja, Marichi, Pulasthya, Atri, Sanatkumara, Devendra, Madanjari, the elephant faced Vinayaka, Subramanya, Bhiringi, these and many others, who had obtained liberation.

To talk about you, you have come into existence now for the eighth time. We have met seven times before now and discussed these very same questions. At one time you were born of akasa, another time of water, then Agni and so on. Rama is now born for the eleventh time to destroy the rakshasas. The Krishna-Avatar that is to come hereafter, will be for the sixteenth time. Some of these creations resemble one another to a large extent with some slight variations and there were others which differed totally from one another with Sun and Moon located differently. In the four yugas forming a kalpa, the behaviour of men would all be different.

Vasishta :

How were you able to conquer Death and live for ever?

Bhusunda :

There is nothing that you do not know, still I shall tell you about it since you ask me. Death does not overtake one who has no unfulfilled desires which are usually like beads strung together on a thread. Death does not approach one who has an undaunted and unruffled mind at all times or one who has totally destroyed all desires or one who has freed himself from the sense of duality. One who is firmly established in Atma is not conquered by Death. Gnanis like you can easily attain that state but to those like me it is very difficult.

Vasishta :

By what path have you attained your present state.

Bhusunda :

In this bodily frame, made up of the five prime elements, there is an upward and a downward current flowing along the central portion, all the time. Just as the Sun and Moon move in the skies constantly, so also do these currents flow, inducing activity in the entire body. This constant flow continues in all the three states of waking, dream and sleep. I am uninterruptedly following their movements. The movement or current in the head is known as Prana and the current in the body is known as Apana.

Watching these currents uninterruptedly is the practice known as Pranayama. There are eight different methods of practising this, of which four pertain to external things and four to internal ideas. The internal Pranayama comprises : (1) 2 Purakas (2) 1 Rechaka and (3) 1 Kumbaka. In like manner the external Pranayama comprises the same 3 processes. This pranayama is not done with respect to the breath, although an initial steady breathing is necessary, but with respect to the nervous current movements. Puraka means perception of external objects which may be inside the body or external to it. When such perceptions arise, if the mind remains unmodified, it is called Puraka. Then Rechaka is to have an unperturbed mind when ideas of the mind arising out of past experiences or imaginative activity present themselves before the mind. Then Kumbaka is that state of mind which is free from either internal or external perceptions i. e. it is a sort of dissolved state of the mind.

The purpose of all these practices is to achieve one pointed state of mind. Continuous practice of any one of the different kinds of pranayama prevents the mind from roving towards other things. After long practice the mind acquires great clarity and remains steady. In this state, the mind cannot undergo modifications nor acquire desires. These practices are prescribed only for those who cannot follow the path of knowledge. Those who like you pursue the path of knowledge acquire it directly without doubt.

Vasishta :

Rama ! If one takes to heart the moral of the life of Bhusunda, he would in like manner acquire the faculty to experience the unity of existence and free himself from Samsara. I have now explained to you both the paths ; you may follow that which you like.

Rama :

All my doubts have indeed been clarified and I have acquired wisdom. But I would request clarification about one doubt. How did this body originate and for what purpose ?

Vasishta :

This body originated out of ignorance and persists due to the same reason. And so, if ignorance is removed the body disappears. It is the mind that has to perceive this body or not. In deep sleep the existence of the body is not felt. The body that exists for the sake of the mind and for carrying out its behests

disappears in sleep. Then in dreams the mind roams far and wide and takes other bodies too and at that time the need for this body is not felt. So, we feel the presence of the body only in the waking state. In the other two states the body ceases to exist. Further, even in the waking state the body's presence is felt only when it is needed for a purpose. When we exercise our fancies, even then the body is not perceived. When a person imagines that he is enjoying with some distant woman then this takes place with another body and this body again disappears. So, the body can claim to exist only whenever its services are needed by the mind. It cannot be considered as an abiding reality nor can we aver that it is totally non-existent. The best that can be said about it is that it is real only for the present.

If the body is to appear and disappear according to the needs or otherwise of the mind, then the Mind, otherwise known as Brahma, is the true creator of the body. This very truth was illustrated in the story of Akasaja in section 3 of Volume I. Then, the destruction of the body is also due to Mind. We exercise our imagination so often in pursuit of pleasures, some of which are realised but many remain unrealised. For the realisation of these unfulfilled desires, we ourselves desire other bodies and so this present body perishes in order to enable us to acquire a fresh body. This means that we ourselves bring about our death and that it is not caused by others.

If the Mind has no sort of desire, then there is no need for a body for, nothing has to be achieved fur-

ther with it. It is in this state that one is ready to enter the disembodied-release.

Thus the cognition of the existence of the body arises only in the state of ignorance. On the dawn of true knowledge, this stuff known as body is felt to be unreal. Is it not foolish then to have any desire or aversion to this non-existent body? Since it is made up of the five elements, it resolves itself again into these elements. Even during its temporary existence, it undergoes constant changes and contains all sorts of impurities exuding bad odour and so forth. There is nothing of value in it, nor has it any qualities of its own. These are all foisted on it by the Mind and are subsequently experienced in like manner. So a truly wise man will have no desire or aversion to it.

We established already that the body is a product of the imagination. With the same imaginative faculty, one can paint a picture on a canvas or carve out an image from a block of stone. If we compare these two sets of products arising out of the imagination, the physical body would be found to be the worse of the two. For, however much one may care for the body, the bad odour, the excreta which it accumulates, are not got rid of and further, it undergoes continuous change heading towards old age and destruction. On the other hand, if the same care be bestowed on the picture or the image, they become a source of abiding joy. Thus one should not mourn over the body. Again, in our dreams we take ever so many bodies and have various enjoyments, but on waking we do not have regrets about the loss of those bodies. Our lives are no more than a long drawn-out dream:

then why should we mourn over death, which is only a disappearance of a non-existent body? The body is nothing but solidified imagination.

PARAMESWARA'S DISCOURSE

Vasishta :

Oh, Rama ! let me now tell you what I had once been taught by Lord Parameswara Himself. Once, I was living on the banks of the river Sanga in Mount Kailas. I spent my time in those days by reading the Shastras critically and doing tapas and so forth. One day when I woke up from samadhi, I found amidst the surrounding inky darkness, a blaze of brilliant light. In a little while I realised that this was due to Parameswara and Parvathi, who were coming towards my hut riding on Nandi. When they came near I welcomed them, offered obeisances and garlanded them. Parameswara accepted these with due attention, enquired about my welfare and lastly asked me if I had attained the state of mental equilibrium. I replied that, by His grace, I had attained the state which I ought to attain but that I had one small doubt about the efficacy of worship offered to the Lord.

TRUE WORSHIP OR PUJA

Eswara :

Oh ! best among the Brahmins ! Since you have acquired true knowledge, I shall tell you all about this worship. Know that the Lord is neither you nor Me, nor Vishnu, Indra or anybody else. It is that which has no beginning nor end, which is outside the pale of knowledge and is known as Brahman. He alone is known as Parameswara and it is He that

should be worshipped by all. But this worship is not to be made with flowers and incense or offers of wealth, but with zeal, intelligence and with the sense of unity of all. This is known as Maha-puja and the deity who is the object of such worship may truly be called God. Only those who are incompetent to perform this higher type of Puja resort to the worship of idols. It is this latter kind of Puja that needs flowers and incense. This kind of puja was devised for the consolation of the ignorant. Of course even this kind of puja, when performed with devotion and faith, gives some mental peace but it is not a means for final Release. What is beyond speech and mind cannot be given form and substance and so the results accruing from the worship of God within such limitations would also be limited. Now this true worship can be made in one of two ways namely, either internally or externally, both being performed mentally. The external puja consists in considering all this external world of men, Devas, Asuras, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and in fact everything as Atma and there by attaining a perfectly tranquil mind. If one is firmly established in the knowledge that everything which is an object of perception is nothing but Atma, then the sense of duality cannot arise. When differentiation is overcome, the Mind then looks on everything as identical with the "Self". In this state, is there a mind? Atma the substratum alone is left. This is the outcome of doing the external puja.

Then the internal puja consists in realising that this body, mind, the sense organs, sense perceptions and the reactions arising therefrom, discriminating

knowledge and everything in fact, is really and truly Atma. Contemplation of this nature is true puja, not the movement of the limbs, or offerings in words. Such a puja can be done anywhere and at all times. Everything that we do or experience must be realised to originate from Him and should therefore be dedicated to Him. One is then established in Atma, by the mind becoming tranquil, egoism being shed and all desires for activity being given up. I am in this state and may you also attain the same state."

Vasishtha :

From what you have said, I learn that the activity of Chith is manifested as this world-phenomena. Then what is this jiva ?

Esvara :

When the Chith appears to be associated with a physical body, it is called jiva. Although Atma ever continues to be Atma only, the expansion or activity that takes place in its presence appears as jiva, when its Atmahood is temporarily forgotten. Just as the objects of a dream or of imagination are only dreams or imaginative ideas respectively, so also this jiva which is an appearance in Atma, cannot be different from Atma. Again in the same manner as the phenomena in dreams and imagination, though unreal, still appear, so also this jiva, though unreal, still appears to exist. In all the three instances the appearances last only for a time ; what is ever permanent is Atma only in various forms.

Moreover the objects of dreams and imaginative activity are furnished by our prior experiences; there are no new objects in that state. So the dream city is only a dream. Whatever is reflected in Atma must be Atma only. If we perceive them differently, then it is due to our ignorance. From this it is clear that activity or perception is purely illusory. Atma cannot become something else. Hence we must conclude that the jive, world and everything is only Atma.

It is this Atma that is fit for worship. What is everywhere, what pervades everything, what perceives, smells, tastes or hears is only Atma. Furnishing the basis for all perceptions, inducing every kind of activity and then enjoying the results of these are all due to this all-embracing Atma. Striving to understand these great truths and contemplating Atma is alone the right way of worshipping.

Rama :

If Chith be the cause of everything and is everything and is ever unchanging, how did it slip from this state ?

THE TWO ASPECTS OF CHITH

Vasishta :

The Chith must be considered to have two aspects viz: (1) a state of perfect repose and (2) a state of activity. This active aspect alone is perceived by us. It is the basis for all worldly activity and since we are also essentially active creatures this

aspect alone is realised by us. If we ourselves are in repose then we will realise the other aspect of Chith. One sitting in a merry-go-round sees the surroundings going round; so do our perceptions too seem to flit past us.

Next if we consider activity, it can only be considered to have arisen from Chith itself. When something is imagined and if this object of imagination be considered as something different, then it becomes firmly established as a separate entity. The jiva that arose in this manner descended in successive steps from the states known as "Self" to (Intellect) and Buddhi and then to Manas and then perceived the world-phenomena. The outward gaze of the Chith is imaginative activity and such imaginative activity had taken on various forms and characteristics since creation and these have continued to be perceived as different entities. If imaginative activity ceases i.e. if the restless mind becomes tranquil and then understands what the "Self" signifies, then all activity will cease and mind becomes transformed to Chith. Thus both activity and repose are themselves ideas of the mind, one set of ideas leading to the Chith being thought of as being in a state of repose and unchanging and the other set as ever changing and producing world forms. It is impossible to know when this imagination arose at first. It is however a constantly recurring process. It has neither a beginning nor an end.

I shall now tell you how the Chith stands in relation to the body. When the Chith, which is

normally in repose, is active the idea of self immediately arises thereby playing the role of a jiva. Forgetting its true nature often and often it gets entangled in externals i.e. the objective world and loses its powers. But whatever state it descends to, these states are still pervaded by Chith, although they are incapable of realising it. For, without being so pervaded by Chith, the jiva would be incapable of having its desires fulfilled.

When in the state of jiva, the original or parent idea "self" gives rise to other ideas and the subject matter for these ideas is derived through the five sense-perceptions. Having become these, one by one, it continues to brood. This "self" idea in conjunction with these sense perceptions becomes discriminating perception or buddhi (intellect). This is no new perception. We call that faculty buddhi which perceives differences in external objects or conditions. When this sense of differentiation has developed to a large and intense extent and when the jiva's sole occupation is to be imagining and wallowing in the objective world, we call that state manas. It is only in this state that the jiva obtains its second or gross body. After acquiring a body, the restless jiva expands its activity still further. This physical body, with the sense organs and mind, forms the soil for the jiva to partake of worldly activity. In all these states it will be found that it is the power of the Chith that is being manifested in a variety of ways. Since the body is an insentient thing it is incapable of perception. External things are reflected in Chith through the aid of the sense

organs and this gives rise to perceptions and so the Chith is the cause of everything. It is with the power of the Chith that this mind state, which came about entirely by imaginative process, seeks a gross body impelled by vasanās. Then this life process continues with the Chith manifesting itself as mind in the subtle state and as prana or nerve current in the gross state. So long as this Chith-sakti energises the body it is said to be alive and when it ceases to do so it is said to be dead. It is only the gross activity or prana that is periodically seen to discontinue in one body resulting in death and then to reappear in another body, giving rise to a fresh lease of life.

Thus ideas such as one or many arise as a result of our imaginative activity but they do not affect the state of Chith. Only if we think of the idea "one" there arises an idea about "many" but if the idea of one itself is an illusion, where then is room to think about "others"? How can one conceive of numbers 1, 2 etc. in that which is everything at all times. Are the waves different from water? The word has no meaning since waves comprise only water and water it is that gives the appearance of waves. Thus these differentiating words are meaningless. Then in a tree, for instance, its branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruits and so forth are all various aspects of the seed. In the same manner, several ideas have been foisted on Chith resulting in various names and forms being perceived by us.

The sense of differentiation, which originated by imaginative activity, can be destroyed only by

counter-imagination. To attain to the state of Chith there is no other path than this. However powerful and deep-rooted old ideas or faiths may be, they cannot match in strength the power of the efforts which can be made now. For, past efforts can no longer be increased or decreased in strength. But the zeal and intensity of present efforts can be augmented in any manner we please. But no effort is needed to exercise imagination; but no effort is needed for not-imagining. All that one needs to do is to keep quiet. If one remains in this state for long, there is no doubt about his attaining abiding peace.

So Chith is at the root of all knowledge and furnishes a foundation for everything. This alone is Truth while everything else is impermanent and therefore illusory. These latter change with time, place and conditions both in their form and characteristics, then perish and then are recreated. This goes on and on. From a speck of dust to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, everything is subject to this change. All the limitations, to which they are subject, are self-imposed ones and they pursue their activity within these limitations. The laws of Nature are also not free from change. So there is no second thing that is permanent for ever.

Thus this objective world is only an appearance or illusion of Chith. Since these appearances too are pervaded by Chith, they acquire the characteristics of being perceptible. So, what we perceive is really Chith. From the atom to the universe all are Chith.

Valmiki:

Vasishta thereupon asked Rama whether he had any further doubts. Rama replied that, besides his doubts having been cleared, his mind had obtained great tranquility. At the moment, he said, he felt as pervading all the three worlds and did not know what "want" meant. All the same, he could never have enough of these great discourses about Atma from the mouth of the illustrious teacher who was a Paramatma himself and so he requested Vasishta to tell him more about Atma.

Vasishta:

Rama! I will accordingly tell you more about Atma. Whenever we desire a thing, the pleasure felt by us is more in the anticipation of getting it than when we actually get it. This is the experience of everyone. Thus the pleasure or the happiness is not in the external things, but in our mind. Desire or aversion for external things is cultivated by the mind. So it is the desire that is the cause of our happiness or misery. But when the mind obtains contentment desires subside. When desires subside the mind is free from modifications. A mind free from modifications remains unperturbed under all conditions.

Desires arise in us due to vasanas i.e. from prior experiences. When any such thing is presented before the sense organs, the mind undergoes modification. The more and more it gets so modified the more do we become a slave to the sense organs. So all our efforts must be directed towards restraining

the tendency to react to external things. If now we consider mind, apart from desire, it is still subject to modification by reason of the sense of differentiation as Knower, Knowledge and Known object. But if all these three be considered as a single object, viz. Knowledge, the mind will not undergo modifications. When we perceive an object there is a two-fold excitation and consequent activity roused in us. One excitation is to rouse the sense organs and present the objects before the witnessing Consciousness. The second excitation manifests itself as a variant of Chith, as a desire or aversion or some other reaction. It is this second activity or modification that must be overcome. If this is achieved the mind will thereafter be steady and spotlessly pure and shine as a Witness. In this state, objects are still cognised, since the body is there, but one obtains visions of the Atma. This is the highest state of achievement, not subject to any kind of change. Like the copper which presents the appearance of gold in the alchemist's furnace, the absolutely tranquil mind shines forth as Atma.

CHITH AND VILVA FRUIT

In the Ithihasas there is an illustration of the Chith which is worth hearing. There is a vilva fruit mighty in size, extending over millions of miles containing within itself many worlds and which is always ripe and never subject to destruction. Even the mighty forces let loose at the end of a Kalpa can make no impression on it. But even though it is so ancient and immovable, it is so very soft and deli-

cate. The universes which appear and disappear within it are innumerable. Its flesh and sap never get dried. The essence of it is equanimity but by the dextrous faculty of what is known as Chith-Sakti, it gives rise to innumerable creations. Thus have been created this expansive sky, the divisions of time, directions, the indestructible Nature, motion manifested as activities, all making up the totality of this universe. This Vilva fruit is the Atma."

CHITH AND A STATUE

To further clarify the nature of the Chith, it is usual to compare it to a statue or the pungency that pervades the pepper. Like a statue it is hard, indivisible, exhibiting homogeneity. Just as the statue is everywhere pervaded only by substance, so also is this world of ours pervaded only by Chith. It is the pungency that is pepper, it is the pepper that is pungent; the one cannot be thought of singly and apart from the other. In the same manner the world cannot be thought of apart from Chith. But in our actual experience, they appear to be different; but it is this sense of difference that enables us to perceive how Chith pervades everything. When this truth is known, the illusory appearance vanishes, that is, the world phenomena disappear in Chith. This Chith is ever in a tranquil state as in deep sleep. But is it right to consider it in this manner? One may ask. We use such means of expression only to clarify the mind. Sleep is not a separate and independent state, for we can speak of it only in conjunction with waking state. Truly speaking all these

words have no meaning at all. Truth is beyond them or between them.

To expatiate further upon Chith; just as a fruit is full of only substance, so is this world fully pervaded by Chith only. Time, space and activity also, though pervaded by Chith, appear to be different from it. Further, words, their meanings, vasanas, imagination, are all based on Chith and exist because of Chith and hence it would be inappropriate to consider them as different from Chith. Without the Chith how is one to know them, or experience them? Just as all parts of a tree are only the manifestations of the seed, so also is this world a manifestation of Chith. The pearl is formed of the oyster, yet it gives the appearance of being different. The sun by his rays illumines the world. In the same way do the rays of the Chith in its active aspect present the illusion of this world phenomena and in its aspect of repose destroys the illusion and shines as the sole Reality. Water for instance presents many aspects as waves, river, lake, ocean, and so forth. It is also a component of many substances. In the same way that a peacock, producing a multifarious sensory effects, is latent as essence of the egg, in like manner all that is manifest in the outside world are also latent in Chith. What is not manifest now is latent in it. This is the Truth.

So all things of the world including men and the gods were latent in Chith as the bird was in its egg and all these beings will at some future time attain the turiya state and subside again in Chith. In that state they are free from reactions to perceptions and

are also in a state of restraint towards objects of perception and in abiding calm, just as a portrait on canvas. This is the state of Chith in restraint. Like the rays of the sun that cannot be perceived in the absence of an obstruction, so also do the Jivan Mukhtas are free from reacting tendencies as their minds do not come into enslaving contact with the objects of the world. There are no differing reactions in their mental outlook as far and near, top and bottom, before and after, and so forth. World, you, I, activity all these too are bereft of any significance to them. For purposes of exchange of ideas, they may all be designated as Chith. The truth however is that even this word is meaningless, since it is beyond words and thought.

Rama :

If everything is Brahman then how did thought or idea and its opposite arise ?

Varishta :

The opposite of thought, i.e. restraint from ideation or nir-Vikalpa indicates a state of lapse from the state of ideation and inability to regain activity. For instance, after milk has turned into curds, it cannot be restored to its original state of milk. But such changes cannot arise in Brahman since both in the beginning and the end it remains as Brahman and so it cannot be other than Brahman even in the interval. We cannot think of any change in what remains unchanged always. Both ideas are mental delusions.

Rama :

If Brahman is the only Reality and it is pure, how did ignorance originate ?

Vasishta :

How can anything arise in Brahman which always remains only as Brahman. Even the very word Brahman is inappropriate to denote that Reality. The expression is used only for purposes of mutual communication. The word avidya (ignorance) indicates absence of knowledge i.e. it indicates non-existence ; then how can we speak of the existence of ignorance ? It is our deluded thinking.

Rama :

But what was your object in saying in the "Upasama Prakarna" that ignorance will be dispelled by enquiry ?

Vasishta :

At that time you were not so well informed as you are now and hence some artifice had to be resorted to in order to make it clear to your then state of mind. To propound great truths to an ignorant man would be like advising one steeped in grief to take a pillar for friend to dispel his grief. Now that you are wise, truths will be explained to you in all their nakedness, without resort to artifices.

When everything is Brahman how can we imagine in it something that is not It ? All articles made of clay are clay fundamentally ; so also all things of the

world are fundamentally Chith. They are all perceived only by Chith and are contained in it. Whatever illusion is perceived in Brahman cannot be anything but Brahman.

Rama :

I have now understood the nature of the Atma from your discourses i.e. Fullness came out of Fullness leaving Fullness behind. Still I would like to ask one question, like a child that repeatedly asks the same question. The father, however, takes a delight in repeatedly answering them. In like manner, I request you to answer me so that I may become firm in my knowledge.

1. Though a live and a dead body have all the five sense organs, why is the one alive to perceptions and the other not ?

2. Both our bodies as well as external things are inert substances ; how then do we have experiences of these objects ?

3. Why do two inert substances not cognise each other ?

Vasishta :

The answers to all these three questions will be plain if you understand the underlying truth. Our sense organs as well as the external objects are both enlivened by the Chith, otherwise there can be no perception. By reason of this activity, Chith identifies itself with Manas and its imaginative creations,

via the sense organs and the objects and their experiences them exactly as imagined. So both are variants of the Mind. Now coming to your question one by one, the dead body has been deserted by the entity Manas and so it is deprived of activity and is inert. Now two inert substances i.e. two illusions cannot perceive each other. This answers your third question also. Coming to the second question, we have explained already that perception can arise only in Manas. We have also explained before that the sense organs as well as substances are both ideas of the Manas. So when Manas enorgises the sense organs it radiates out like the rays of the Sun and pervades the substances in its range, thereby enlivening them too. That is to say Mind is the common factor between the sense organs and the objects and so brings them to a common category or plane. This is what is known as perception. The phenomenon arises in the jiva, who is none other than Chith, when it is in the state known as Manas.

Here it is well to note one point, viz: that the physical body and its organs are the creations of Manas. Mind did not arise out of the body. Gross substances can originate only from subtle states. This will be realised if we consider the five elementary principles viz: akasa, motion, tejas, fluidity and solidity, which arose in the order mentioned. In the same way these five sense perceptions in us were imagined by Manas and subsequently brought into being. In the wake of these arose the physical body. If we now consider the constituents of our being, it comprises the "self", buddhi or intellect, manas, and

the five sense perceptions known together as the "cardinal Eight" (Puri-Ashtakam). This is what is commonly known as jiva. The activities that take place in the subtle state can only be in the form of ideas. It is these ideas which subsequently descend to a state of grossness. So all that the jiva experiences subsequently are what were imagined previously by it. So one sees and experiences only what he has previously imagined. It is in this manner that natural laws or characteristics were established i.e. after repeated experiences of what was previously imagined spontaneously. This is made clear by the very word itself "Sva-bhava" (characteristics or nature) where "Sva" means "self" and "bhava" means "idea" i.e. its own idea.

We spoke up to now about the jiva's subtle state i.e. the state without the physical body. In this state it is always in a state akin to dream i.e. imaginative activity. As soon as it takes on a physical body, it acquires the characteristics peculiar to inert substances viz: state of deep sleep. This state is natural to inert substances and so it becomes one of the states of jiva. Since however the ideas imagined by the jiva have to be realised, it returns to the dream state again and again. The duration of these dreams may be short or long. The first class of dreams of very short durations are termed "dreams" by us and the second class of dreams of long durations are mistakenly termed by us as waking state, since this state is predominantly concerned with inert substances and deals with them as if they were real. True waking state is that in which one is in an all-knowing

state. In this state there is neither dream nor deep sleep. This state is called turiya state.

Then considering the dream condition of the jiva, since it is constantly exercising its imaginative faculty and planning, it prolongs its life-period to an unduly long period extending even to several yugas. These ideas arising from imagination are manifold and we cannot designate them as either real or unreal. But the life period goes on prolonging as long as imagination is active and so, in fulfillment of these ideas, the jiva takes on one body after another and wallows in samsara.

THE STORY OF ARJUNA

Vasishta :

Rama: You might also hear what the Lord Sri Krishna would expound in the next yuga to an enlightened Kshatriya by name Arjuna, in order to cross the ocean of samsara.

Before the end of each cycle of 4 yugas, the lord of Death usually retires to perform tapas both out of weariness from the long continued task of determining the time of death of everyone and also to expiate the sin arising out of it. This duty had befallen the lot of Yama as other duties had been assigned to Sun, Moon and stars, as well as the five elements akasa, motion etc. So when Yama abstains from performing his duty and goes to tapas, death decreases very much. The populations will increase to such an extent that people will not find the means of sustenance. Under these conditions the Devas, taking pity on the suffer-

ing mankind, would contrive some means of alleviating their sufferings i.e. they would implore Lord Narayana Himself to do something about it. The Lord would accordingly descend among the mortals taking the dual form as Sri Krishna endowed with knowledge and as Arjuna with the counterpart of knowledge. This Arjuna will be born in the family of Pandu along with four other brothers. The eldest of these brothers Yudhistara by name would be a most generous person and another brother of his would bear the name Bhima. In course of time, there will be a dispute about the rulership of the kingdom between the sons of Pandu and their great paternal uncle's sons known as Kauravas led by Duryodhana. This will lead to a war among them with lakhs of warriors participating on either side. Arjuna, instead of inspiring his followers to do battle heroically, would become despondent at the prospect of killing his kinsmen, friends, gurus and so forth, arrayed against him and allow his mighty bow Gandiva to slip from his hand. At the sight of this, Sri Krishna, who had agreed to be his charioteer, would advise Arjuna imparting true wisdom and enjoining him to do his duty as a warrior. Rama! you may now hear the path of wisdom that would be propounded by the Lord to Arjuna.

LORD'S DISCOURSE

Arjuna! It is pure delusion to think that you would be the cause of their destruction or for them to think that their destruction would be wrought by you. When they as well as you are both Atma, who can

be killed by whom? At all times and everywhere there is nothing but Atma. Only those that are egoistic think that all activities are pursued by their own efforts. If however one, destroying the ego sense, roots out the whole world, he will still not be considered to be the destroyer.

Activities are carried out by the organs of action. The contact or coming together of the bodily organs and external things is called action. What is there of true value in such activities for the mind to undergo modifications. If with such a frame of mind, activities are pursued, i.e. after casting off all desires and shedding away egoism, then such a one cannot be deemed to have indulged in activity. Now, fighting is your birthright and the results of such fighting would not affect you in any way. So, regardless of results and giving up desire and aversion, engage yourself in this fight. Leave all fruits of actions to Iswara.

Arjuna :

Lord! may I request you to explain what is (1) sacrifice of objective contacts; (2) dedicating everything to the Lord and (3) Sanyasa.

Lord :

Doing away totally with the mental modifications arising from vasanas and restraining imaginative activity is known as Brahmic state. The effort to reach this state is known differently as the path of Knowledge or path of Yoga. To realise that all that exists is only Brahman and that there is nought but Brahman

is what is known as dedication to the Lord. The highest state is considered to be that in which one discards the ideas "subject-object" and keeps his mind calm and unruffled, as steadfast as the core of a rock and devoid of all ideas internally or externally. The world concept is just a microscopic variant from the vast nothingness mentioned above. And objects are again mere ideas which appear to be different from pure Intelligence in which they take their rise. One who realises this and, discarding these differences, does his duties without an eye to results is said to be a Sanyasi. Total avoidance of imaginative activity is what is known as sacrifice of objective contacts.

Arjuna :

You are said to have two forms; which of these should one seek?

Lord :

Yes! One is the common form having a body and name, holding the conch and discus. The other is that which exists without a beginning or end shining forth as the end of all knowledge and is secondless. Everyone should take to what he is fit for. But those that follow the formless state are not reborn. Untill one is able to grasp this state he can devote himself to the other form.

Arjuna! hear more about the Truth which is intended for your uplift. Our reactions such as happiness, misery, heat and cold, are all momentary phenomena and they disappear later and so one should bear with them. These differentiations arise by virtue of

the fact that the Atma is all-pervasive. How can Atma be affected by these which belong to the class of non-Atma? Non-Atma can affect only Non-Atma. But when all are Atma how can non-Atma arise in it?

So these percepts or multifarious objective phenomena, from the smallest particle up to the gods, are like the waves on the sea, subsiding in due time, just like the waves themselves. Atma alone is the abiding Truth. So wise men are content to look on this world phenomena uninfluenced in the least thereby. To give such attention to the body as is just needed for its upkeep and without any attachment to it is what is known as detachment to bodily duties and not the total abstention from all physical activity while mentally ruminating over them, which is an indication of attachment. So you should not abstain from the duties enjoined on you. Whether you kill your enemies or you are killed by them, all finally reach one goal. Why then this despondency?

Arjuna :

Do not the ignorant people sustain a loss by the loss of body?

Lord :

It is the same to all, for who can sustain a loss by losing that which does not exist?

Arjuna :

How did people get the ideas of Heaven and Hell?

Lord :

The Chith in conjunction with the five sense-perceptions appears as the jiva when it enters a body.

In this state it experiences the world around it, thereby accumulating vasanas, and constructs other spheres for enjoyment or punishment. But in truth there are no such places as Heaven or Hell. Hence, wise men advise that one should devote all his efforts at rooting out the activities which such ideas induce. Our present efforts must be considered more potent than vasanas.

Activity under vasanas is what is known as jiva. When vasanas are completely overcome the jiva shines as verily Atma. Vasanas arise out of memory which in turn is due to desire. Desire again is caused by the ego-sense. The jivan-mukhta state is one without any vasanas and so it is a state to be achieved during one's lifetime and not after death. You must therefore be in this state and carry out the duties that befall you unsolicited. If one has no eye to the fruits of actions, he does not accumulate vasanas. Vasanas arise out of the sense of duality i.e. treating the world phenomena as distinct from Brahman. Conceiving it as having originated from Brahman, or as its shadow and still treating it as distinct from it, is inappropriate. The reflection of Brahman, which is akasic in nature, must likewise be Brahman. With such firm convictions, if the sense of differentiation arising out of vasanas be rooted out then the mind will be like a burnt seed and no further delusions will arise. The perceptions that arise in us out of the contact with the objective world is a strange phenomenon. It is just like a picture on a canvas without a painter to sketch it. After the picture was produced the canvas came to bear it. The painter,

the canvas and the picture are however all purely akasic in nature.

Arjuna :

By your grace all my doubts have been dispelled and I am freed from ignorance and so I am now prepared to do your bidding.

Lord :

If one keeps his mind free from all modifications whenever it comes in contact with external objects, then Satwa predominates and tranquility of mind is secured. It is the outgoing tendency of the mind that is responsible for ignorance and bondage. If this tendency is constantly checked then the ideas do not take root and gradually subside. You are now established in knowledge and have attained the state of a Jivan-mukhta and so fear and despondency have left you".

Vasishta :

After giving these discourses the Lord will be wrapt in silence for a while. And Arjuna, true to his word to the Lord, will engage himself in fight and destroy his foes. With such mental resolve, O! Rama! you should discard the contacts of objects and ideas, thus becoming a true sanyasi and consecrate everything to Brahman. Know that to be Atma, which appears as everything at all times and in which everything is rooted. Although it may appear to be far away and out of reach, actually it is very very near to us, in fact within the mind itself. Know Atma to be that light of the Chith which shines when all percep-

tive tendencies cease and there is nothing to create fresh tendencies. That is the very essence of the objective world. It is that which appears as both real and unreal. It is that which appears as the world phenomena to the uninquiring and ignorant and as Atma to those who have attained wisdom. Only those who, with this firm conviction, have acquired a state of mind in which there is neither the rise of an idea, nor its disappearance, can be said to have attained perfect tranquility of mind. Such a person is freed from the sense of duality and is like one in deep sleep to the objective perceptions. However much he may participate in the affairs of the world, he would still be deemed to be uncontaminated by them, since he has no likes nor dislikes. This can be likened to a shadow that knows not the intentions of its original substance. In that state all objective perceptions can only be considered as the spontaneous activities of the Chith. Truly it is not possible to describe that state in words, nor even to conceive of it. All these various modes of expressions are used only to convey to some extent the nature of the Ultimate to the unenlightened. But in truth these words have no meaning nor even these discourses.

The Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are in this state, i.e. totally akasic in nature, in a state of pure Being, which is also Known as Saththa-Samanya state.

Rama :

When the mind, buddhi and "self" idea are dissolved, so as to be in the Saththa-Samanya state, what would be called "the mind"?

Vasishta :

It is only Brahman that is the essence of everything. Objects perceived through the senses are firmly rooted in their respective properties, permeated by Brahman. In sounds or words, it is Brahman that permeates them with that particular faculty; in taste, it is Brahman that is sensed as taste; and similarly too every other sense perception and also Prithvi, Appu, Tejas, Vayu, Akasa, immortality, human species, other creatures, time, space, activity, birth, death and in fact everything. Thus the state indicated is an all-pervasive state. But just as water lends itself to present varying appearances as waves, whirlpool, waterfall and so forth, so also does Brahman enable multifarious things to be imagined and then experienced. It is similar to the ghost being imagined by a young boy and then the terror arising from it being experienced.

Rama :

If this world phenomena is an illusion, then I too am an illusion and so also are my perceptions. Then how do we have enduring experiences?

Vasishta :

Although all that is perceived, reaching up to Brahma, are indeed illusions they are yet experienced as real during the state of ignorance but when wisdom dawns they will be realised as illusions. Just as in a dream it is the jiva that projects himself as the objects of the dream and then experiences them, in like manner it is the Chith that creates this world

phenomena and then experiences them. It is only illusions that are sensed and experienced. The reason for such illusions being experienced lies in our own imagination which creates such ideas. All that are sensed and experienced now were previously ideas of the imagination. These ideas, which now appear as world phenomena, were formed in the beginning of creation and continued to be experienced again and again, so much so, that they now appear to be real. This imagination is a strange thing, as it can experience an instant as a long period or a very long period as an instant. It can create a world in an instant. It is the Chith that in the active or imaginative aspect appears as creation and in repose appears as pralaya. In whatever way it may appear they are all unreal. But many strange phenomena arise in the imaginative aspect. For instance we find heat in water, gold in solid rock and it is said that all manner of gifts may be had from Kalpa tree. We find toad within a solid rock; the Chandrakantha stone sheds water particles on being exposed to moonlight; we see our own deaths in dreams; a cloth appears as pot. Ideas arising in imagination by constant rumination are subsequently experienced as concrete objects or results. So many strange phenomena happen in this world in conjunction with the illusions like time, place and activity. Everyone experiences the Reality as unreal and the unreal as real. All these experiences are due to our own imagination.

THE STORY OF 100 RUDRAS

Vasishta :

Rama ! to give you an idea of the strange nature of the mind, let me recount to you a story of old from the Itihasas.

Long long ago, there was a bikshu who had been steadily practising the state of samadhi for a long time, as a result of which his mind was very clear and acute. One day when he woke up from the state of samadhi and did not know what to do, he got the idea of whiling away his time by identifying himself with the thoughts and ideas of ordinary folk. Imagining himself to be one of them, taking the name of Jivatan for himself, he lived their life mentally participating in their joys and sorrows. Accordingly he imagined himself to be fully drunk and fell into a state of sleep.

He then had a dream. The subjects of dreams are based on waking experiences. Following this truth, Jivatan dreamt that he was a brahmin, because he had a longing to be one during his waking life. This brahmin after finishing his day's duties fell into sleep. This brahmin also had his own longings fulfilled in his dream, namely, to be a king of a small territory. This king having attended to his official duties and to the peuples' wants went home and after taking his food and drink went to sleep. He also had a dream in which he saw himself as king of kings who in turn did likewise and at night, when he went to sleep, he also had a dream as if he were a divine

maiden, to whom he was devoted greatly. Like all maidens, she had a longing of her own, namely, to have eyes like those of a deer. This lady who was dreaming of deer all the time turned into a deer. The deer roamed about the forest and at last when tired rested under a tree and dozed off. What else can be the object of its dream state than the creeper to which it had a great liking and so it turned into that creeper. This imaginative faculty, be it remembered, is possessed also by animals as well as plants, although to a much less degree. The Chith, being all pervading manifests itself in every species of created things. It is the Chith that enables every sort of imaginative activity i.e. ideas to appear as external phenomena. Whatever idea is deep rooted appears as an external object.

To resume our story, the forest creeper, which was always longing for the bee which used to enjoy the honey from its flowers, once felt that it had been cut and so, when it died, it turned into a bee. The bee roamed amidst the forest flowers and at last finding a lotus settled on it with no heart to part from it. Just then an elephant that happened to come near the pond pulled the plant and swallowed it up along with the bee. The bee which had died with the thought of elephant, which had struck terror into it, turned into an elephant. The elephant roamed amidst the forest care-free for some time, was then captured and tamed by a king who, sometime later, went to a fight riding on the elephant. There the elephant was mortally wounded. While dying the forest bees swarmed about it and since this sight was uppermost

in its mind, it was born again as a bee. This bee was then born as a swan which in turn was born as a king of swans which, by virtue of good association with the wise, ended the life cycles as a Rudra.

After being in this state for some time, the Bikshu realised that the cause of the innumerable births and deaths was imaginative activity. One day he got the idea of looking back on the innumerable lives he had led. When finally he thought of the bikshu he had dreamed, he wanted to see him. Having found him still sleeping, he woke him up. The bikshu having got up attended to the daily routine and as usual went into the samadhi state. When he woke up from samadhi, he indulged in fancies just to while away the time. This fancy again passed through a similar cycle of events finally ending in release as a Rudra.

So there were two Rudras now. Not being content with the final state attained and yielding to the temptation of recalling the past, he indulged again in fancies. The moment this was done, immediately the whole train of life cycles followed inevitably. Of course these various life cycles were not the same. There were differences among them according to time, place and circumstances. In this way, there appeared 100 Rudras. When once all these Rudras were assembled together, they found themselves to be all alike and with identical mental make-up. But when they looked back on their past lives, they realised that those states could not notice the relationship that subsisted among themselves, for they were not endowed with that deep insight.

When once the real god Rudra met those imaginary Rudras, He told them that they had all to lead mortal lives much longer and so sent them back to their wives. These Rudras will ultimately attain a state of wisdom and end as either Vidyadharas or attendants of god Rudra. The reason for these many life cycles that befell the bikshu was that he indulged in imaginative fancy. What began as a sort of sportive activity, resulted in endless lives and misery. Many life cycles were lived through in the flood of mental stream. But all these jivas, subject to births and deaths, are no more than appearances in Chith and not real. They appear as dream phenomena and then disappear likewise. Dreams within dreams in countless numbers appear and disappear. When the Chith is in an active state the illusions that arise in untold numbers give varying appearances according to time, place and circumstances. But all these appearances partake of the nature of the imaginative fancies of the perceiver. Just like one, who tumbles down a precipice must necessarily reach the bottom, so also must one imaginative fancy lead on to innumerable others and consequent life cycles.

Rama :

May I request you to let me know where and in what state this bikshu is at present?

Valmiki

Vasishta replied that he would locate his whereabouts by going into samadhi that night and tell him about it on the next day. The assembly dispersed for the day and when it reassembled on the next day

Vasishta, in accordance with the nature of wise people who voluntarily seek the young and give them sound advice, called Rama and began to answer his question of the previous day.

Vasishta :

All through the night I was in samadhi and searched for the bikshu in many universes without being able to locate him anywhere. Finally I located him in a cave in one of the forests in the northerly direction. He appeared to me to have been in continuous samadhi for 21 days. There were many people waiting outside the cave for him to wake up from samadhi. After seeing him I found several more bikshus in various other places, not less than about a hundred of them. Everyone was somewhat different from the others. Then on reflection I realised that it was not only this bikshu who had these diverse experiences, but even these great rishis who are assembled here must have passed through several life cycles.

This world is but an illusion which presents itself to perception when the Chith is active. They are like the bubbles on the surface of water and disappear before we can scrutinise them. In like manner, we too, being none other than Chith, pass through many illusions of life cycles comprehended by name and form and then vanish for ever. It is but one Truth that is experienced by us as multiformed existences.

Dasaratha :

Oh revered Sage ; If the bikshu could be brought over here, we can send our servants to fetch him.

Vasishta :

You can only find his body there, since his jiva has obtained release. In a few days even this body would be disposed of by his men. As we had already stated, he was only an appearance in Chith. Since he let his imagination loose, he underwent many life cycles and finally obtained Release. But all these appearances or illusions exist only in our perceptions, although in fact nothing transpires. When percepts arise, we designate them as the active state of Chith and when none arises, we call it the state of repose. The differences that we perceive in these illusory appearances arise only in our minds and in the diverse words that we use to indicate the states of our minds. But if words be set aside and if the mind is one pointed, how can differences be perceived. In that state, only the all-embracing Truth will be left. Thus the method you have to follow is to check the outgoing tendency of the mind and remain in the state of mounam i.e. akin to deep sleep.

Rama :

I know only of three mounams, viz: (1) the mounam relating to Speech, (2) mounam with reference to all the five sense organs ; although then the mind would remain in activity ; (3) the state with not only the five sense organs but also the mind being kept forcibly suppressed.

Vasishta :

Some wise men speak of 4 different kinds of mounams about which I shall tell you.

1. Those that refrain from speech and observe complete silence. All the other organs would however be active.
2. All the five sense organs are forcibly suppressed although the mind will be active in all the organs.
3. Same as under 2, but with the mind fixed on one particular object or idea.
4. To be in a state akin to deep sleep in the waking state, with the mind completely unresponsive.

Besides these four kinds of mounams, there is a fifth one known as the mounam of the mind, which is the state of all jivan-mukhtas. In the case of those observing the mounam, mentioned under (3), the mind is not completely neutralised but is attached to a single idea and so they cannot obtain Release while living. It serves no purpose if Release is obtained after death. In the case of those mentioned under (4), the mind is in a sort of vacant state, dead to all perceptions. Whereas in the jivan mukhta state, although the mind participates in everything, it remains unaffected i.e. remains in a state of mounam. Those who are in this state are considered to have attained Release while living. Such a state can be achieved only by pure knowledge. They shine as the pure light of knowledge. So this is the state that one should strive to attain.

Rama :

The bhikshu had only one mind, how then was he transformed into 100 Rudras ?

Vasishtha :

Experiences partake of the nature of imaginative ideas and all of them are illusions against the background of Atman.

Rama :

Why is Parameswara naked and always besmeared with ashes and why does he always spend his time in the cremation ground ?

Vasishtha :

Parameswara, Vishnu and Brahma are Realised souls and they are not bound by rules and regulations. They are beyond all laws. Only ordinary people need rules and regulations to govern their conduct, as otherwise there would be absolute lawlessness and might would be right, as among the fishes. Chaos alone will prevail. But these jivan-mukhtas have risen above all desires and are freed from vasanas. They carry on their duties without any thought or attachment to them. Since Parameswara had been conceived of as mentioned above by our ancestors, He continues to be thought of by us also in like manner. The same is true of Narayana also.

They adhere strictly to mounam of the mind and perceive everything without reaction. But such a state can be with or without physical body. This state can be attained only by adhering to one Truth and indefatigably living up to it all the time. Such practice is of two kinds, namely (1) to strive to obtain mental equanimity by following the path of knowledge

according to the Sankhyas: (2) to quieten the movement of prana according to the yoga school and thereby attain mental equanimity. Whatever may be the path followed, the final attainment is the same, namely the destruction of the mind. Prana and Manas are mutually dependent on each other. If one of them is quelled, the other will also be quelled at the same time, since both are the results of vasanas. Vasanas gather momentum because of memory. The mind obtains for itself a body in the same manner as a child gets the idea of a ghost or as we see our own death in dreams. In truth, nothing is real but all the same these illusions are experienced by us. The body and the consequent bondage or release, ideation or blankness of mind, teaching and being taught are all illusions.

Rama :

If Release is to be obtained by the prana becoming inactive, then all men should attain that state after death.

Vasishtha :

In the case of ordinary men, the activity of prana does not cease even after death. The prana, by virtue of the vasanas, reacts with the five elements and takes on a fresh birth in accordance with the vasanas. It will never be freed from the cycle of births and deaths. But the prana-manas combination that has attained knowledge is free from the taint of vasanas and so it does not renew the contact with the five elements and so is not reborn. These two principles prana and manas are inter-dependant like

a chariot and charioteer. In the absence of vasanas mind phenomenon subsides and in consequence the prana also. By the acquisition of knowledge, all objects are realised to be illusory and so the activity of prana subsides. This activity of prana is nothing else but vasanas. If these are got rid of, then what remains is only Release. Knowledge arises by enquiry and by knowledge one realises the ultimate Truth. So then, by following either the path of yoga or knowledge, if mental reactions be overcome and equipoise be obtained even for a little while, then it will be easy to attain that state frequently rather easily.

VETALA'S QUESTIONS (GHOST)

Birth and non-birth indicate the two different aspects of Chith namely activity and repose. This truth can be realised only by deep enquiry and the true knowledge arising therefrom. As soon as the mind gets clarity, this illusion of samsara will disappear. I am reminded of an old story connected with this subject which I shall now relate to you.

There was once a Vetala living in a dense forest on the slopes of the Vindhya hills. Owing to association with wise and good people, this Vetala was leading a life of contentment and never transgressed the rules of good conduct. One day it was so hungry that it went towards the nearest city in search of food and reached its precincts. Having seen a man coming in its direction and having been satisfied at getting a prey to appease its hunger, it raised a hair-raising yell. But out of its innate good nature, it did not want to

kill anyone and eat him without first ascertaining about the nature and conduct of the man. So, as soon as the person came near, it asked him who he was and told him further that, as it proposed to eat him to satisfy its own hunger, he might speak out if he had anything to say about himself.

The person accosted by the Vetala happened to be the king of the area. He was on his nocturnal visits to round up bad characters and punish them suitably. He was a brave good man and was further a true gnanî. So he treated the Vetala in a very casual manner and after letting it know who he was, and telling it that it would not do any unbecoming thing, asked what it wanted of him.

Vetala

True I will not do anything unjust but I would not spare any ignorant men and if I prey upon them it would not be wrong, since it is immaterial whether they are alive or dead. So I propose to ask you a few questions and if you answer them correctly I will spare you, otherwise you will become my prey.

Vetala's Questions:

1. This universe is illumined by a Being so that the mind's eye can perceive it. What Being is it?
2. By what power is this universe sustained?
3. Countless millions of lives are generated as dreams within dreams. Whose dreams are they?

4. After everything is given up by a man, what is left behind?

5. When the trunk of a plantain tree is stripped layer after layer what one finds is again and again the green bark.

6. What is that mountain of this universe of perception akin to the Meru of the Solar system?

7. What is that atomic Being in which this universe is perceived?

8. What is that in which this universe is perceived as one of substance & weight?

Vasishta:

After the King had heard these questions, he smiled at the Vetala and began to answer its questions.

The king:

This universe is like a ripe fruit appearing from the activity of the Chith. There is a branch of a tree bearing innumerable such fruits. There is a tree having thousands of such branches. There is a forest with thousands of such trees. There is a mountainous territory having thousands of such forests. There is a territory containing thousands of such mountainous areas. There is a solar system containing thousands of such territories. There is a universe containing thousands of such solar systems. And there are many such universes contained within what is like an atom within an atom. This is what is known as Chith or the subtle sun which illumines everything in the world.

All the things of the world take their rise in it. Amidst all this incessant activity, the Chith is ever in undisturbed repose.

Time, space and states of existence are all mere variants of Chith. What is known as pure activity is only the "non-repose" state of the Chith. It is this state that produces the illusion of world phenomena. Although this appears as one and many, as an atom as well as the mighty universe, it suffers no change in itself and continues to be in an unruffled and crystal-clear condition. Thus all that is perceptible exist only as knowledge itself. This is their true state of existence. Oh: Vetala! you have only the understanding of an uniformed lad and so how can you comprehend these great truths?

Vasishta :

The King continued to smile at the Vetala after he stopped talking. On hearing these words full of wisdom and not having been in a position to say anything, the Vetala took leave of the king and went its way, forgetting even its hunger.

You too Rama! being a Muni must follow such a path, i.e. keeping the mind as empty as akasa and rooted in peace and contentment to carry on like Bhagiratha whatever duty comes unsolicited.

THE STORY OF BHAGIRATHA.

Vasishta :

Once upon a time this entire globe was under the overlordship of King Bhagiratha. This king was an

unrivalled warrior besides a very good man and generous in making gifts. Amidst various good qualities he was the foremost among men in making indefatigable efforts at achieving anything he wanted. Directing such efforts in making tapas to propitiate the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Parameswara, he achieved many things impossible of attainment by ordinary mortals. Among such achievements was that of bringing the river Ganga to enrich the lands of the earth. Although this river Ganga encircled the skies and the nether world like a sacred thread and protected those regions, the earth had not been blessed with its bounties and this had been felt as a great want. Moreover the waters of the earth had been emptied by the sage Agasthiya while performing sandhya and so the earth remained without any water. To remove these two great wants Bhagiratha performed miracles of effort and brought Ganga to water the land, so that the peoples of the earth should be greatly indebted to him.

After he had achieved many impossible things in the course of a long period of time, he happened to be alone one day when he fell into a reflective mood. All the achievements and gifts made so far appeared to him as mere sport and of no value at all. It looked as if he had been doing the same things again and again like children. A wise man would never waste his time in this manner. In all his achievements up to then, there was nothing to give abiding peace. So he thought that he must learn to free himself from these recurring activities. After coming to this conclusion, he went

to consult the family preceptor by name Thrithalar and told him what he had in his mind.

Thrithalar :

If one is steeped in the contemplation of the Atma for a long time and thereby discards the sense of duality, then he will perceive everything as Atma only. In that condition all miseries vanish and one is freed from the sense of bondage to the body and all doubts vanish. Then one looks with an equal eye on all activities and duties. As all objects of knowledge are only aspects of the Intelligent principle, creation and destruction can never more befall him.

Bhagiratha :

I know that Atma is perfect repose and free from gunas. The body is an inert substance. How can one achieve the state of Atma with the help of this body?

Thrithalar :

If knowledge is gained about the objects of perception, then there is no re-birth for the jiva, for it then looks with an equal eye on everything, be it wife or children or wealth or anything. Atma is a state bereft of the sense of duality. To realise this is to have attained knowledge and not to realise his ignorance. If desire and aversion be completely discarded, then the burden of Samsara disappears.

Bhagiratha :

How can one get rid of this egoism which is rooted firmly in this body since ages?

Thrithalar :

Effort combined with zeal in rooting out desires in objective phenomena completely will lead to that Satevic state and then egoism will gradually be shed away. If the activity of the five senses subside, the true nature of the "Self" will be realised. When everything is discarded and the mind is stilled then the "Self" will appear as the All-embracing Atman.

Vasishtha :

After learning these great truths, Bhagiratha went back to his palace and began performing a yagna known as "Agnishtomam" and in accordance with the injunctions for its performance, he bestowed gifts on all and sundry for three days and nights continuously without enquiring even whether any of them was deserving of a gift or not. In this manner he gifted away his entire possessions. Following the precepts of the guru, he gave up even his kingdom and bestowed it on the neighbouring King who had always been his enemy. With the beggar's bowl in his hand he wandered aimlessly for some time. Having given up all desires and since thereby the mind was completely detached, true Knowledge dawned on him naturally. In this state of mind, he went back unknowingly to his own erstwhile kingdom and even begged his food from his erstwhile ministers, who recognised their former master but were helpless to do anything about it.

After some time, it so happened that the neighbouring King died childless. So his ministers set about looking for a suitable person to be anointed as

King. In the course of their travels the ministers accidentally met Bhagiratha and having seen his kingly men and noble qualities, decided immediately that he was the fittest person to occupy the throne. They then acquainted Bhagiratha with the object of their quest and requested him to accept the kingship. Bhagiratha thought for a while. He realised that he had neither likes nor dislikes and so being a king or not being one was all the same to him. There was then no need to spurn away what came unsolicited and so he agreed to carry out the services of a king. Thus he became a king once again of not only the kingdom forsaken by him but that of his former foe also. Even though he wielded the power of a king, he did not allow his mind to slip away from perfect equanimity. Rising above desire and aversion and with the mind ever at repose, he pursued such activities as came his way unsolicited.

It was during this period of his life that the idea came to him to enrich the earth by bringing in Ganga. In order to achieve his purpose, he entrusted the care of the kingdom to his ministers and went out to perform tapas. This he pursued for thousands of years in an undaunted and relentless manner and succeeded in his efforts. Thus although Bhagiratha had become a jivan-Mukhta, he did not abstain from performing the duties of a king or what was good for common weal.

THE STORY OF SIKIDWAJA

Vasishta :

‘ Oh, Rama! you can even follow the path pursued by Sikidwaja. This man attained mental

equanimity, looking on everything with an equal eye and indulged only in such activities as came to him unsought and was firmly rooted in Atman.

He lived in the previous Dwapara yuga and he is bound to reappear in the next Dwapara yuga. But one peculiarity about him is that, whenever he is born on this earth, he will live with the same wife, as they were so dear to each other. In fact all that takes place in this universe are thus repeated again and again in accordance with the laws of Nature.

He was born in the Dwapara yuga of the fifth cycle of the seventh Manwanthra in Malwa adjoining the Vindhya hills in Jambudwipa. He was the most illustrious among the men of his time, with a rare beauty of person and rarer qualities of head and heart. He was moreover brave, matchless in valour and skilled in all the arts and sciences. Naturally he brought all the adjoining kingdoms under his sway and was the sole monarch over them. Although he wielded such power and was a bachelor, he was always possessed of an unruffled mind. He was munificent in his gifts, always kept good company and delighted everyone with his sweet words.

When one day he was enjoying the delights of the palace grove all alone, the cool southerly breeze, the delightful fragrance from the flowers and the beauty of the surroundings all combined to rob Sikidwaja's mind of its usual equanimity. In this state of mind, ideas of enjoyment and of woman's company naturally arose. As he was young these ideas grew in strength quickly and, so to say, overpowered him.

The ministers who were wise and intelligent, perceived their rank, noted the change in the King and knowing the cause thereof immediately decided to find a wife for him befitting his status and his person. Without waste of time, they set about it and scoured the countries in search of a suitable bride. They found her finally in the daughter of a neighbouring king, Chudalai by name. The marriage was solemnised within a few days thereafter.

The king and queen led an extremely happy and contented life for a long period of years like Manmatha and Padmini, each finding in the other all that he or she wanted. In fact, Sikidwaja's mind was completely engrossed in Chudalai and Chudalai's mind in Sikidwaja.

But, however happy one may be, it lasts only for a time. Nothing in the world is felt to be a source of happiness all the time; everyone of them begins to pall after a time. Further, as one advances in age and the strength of body and charm begin waning, the desire for various things wanes naturally and thoughts of the next life begin to increase. And so the king and queen, moved by such considerations as well as by virtue of vasanas, interested themselves in the enquiry about Atma. This enquiry was made both independently as well as jointly. Chudalai having had a very penetrating intellect and having pursued the enquiry ardently and indefatigably, came quickly to definite conclusions about the nature of the Atma. Sometime thereafter she was firmly established in wisdom, but this did not happen to Sikidwaja. He

was engrossed in various rites and observances; but he noticed that his wife seemed to be more and more beautiful in outlook and appearance and radiated happiness.

So, one day when they were together, Sikidwaja asked his wife what she did to her body to resist the ravages of time, whether she underwent kayakalpa treatment or partook of the elixir of life or whether she found any lasting happiness not known to anyone.

"You appear to be steeped in calmness of mind at all times and are serenely happy. By what practices did you acquire this state of mind?"

Chudalai:

My mind is absolutely free from all pairs of opposing ideas such as "IS or IS NOT". I am firmly rooted in the conviction that all that is apparent to the senses is not "Self". I am neither "in existence" nor "in non-existence". I am beyond creation and annihilation. All phenomena that present themselves and disappear before the Consciousness take place in the empty akasa as mere sporting activities. I look upon everything as "Self" and I consider "Self" as nothing outside of itself. Being in this frame of mind and having discarded everything, I am in the state of perfect bliss.

Vasishta:

When Sikidwaja heard these words from his wife, which conveyed no sense to him, he thought that out of ignorance and inexperience of age Chudalai was

uttering some nonsense and so he laughed outright. On the other hand, Chudalai, having witnessed the reaction of her husband to her wise words, realised that he was still steeped in ignorance and that in this state he was impervious to learn the great truths of life. However, she was anxious that her husband should by some means gain true knowledge and so she let time effect this for him. As far as she was concerned, she was in the enjoyment of perfect bliss.

During this period, Chudalai learnt the art of flying through space, in order to while away her leisure hours. She practiced pranayama and such other practices prescribed for the purpose and in due course became proficient in the art.

Rama :

All these gross objects owed their rise to the principle of activity and are sustained by it. Then what power enables one to attain this art of flying in space ?

Vasishta :

In general, there are three paths followed by men, viz: (1) to attain what must be achieved, which is the knowledge of the Atman; (2) to give up what must be discarded, and (3) to do or not what lies intermediate between the two paths, which may or may not be pursued. In such pursuits what is followed by the wise is discarded by the ignorant and what is discarded by the wise is followed by the ignorant. With these facts in mind, you will listen to what I say regarding the attainments.

What the jiva can achieve in this world is obtained with the aid of time, place, money and activity. Among these four, activity is the most important thing since, even with the other three factors being propitious, nothing can be achieved without activity, in the same manner that pots cannot be made without the active hands of the potter even though clay may be available. So no activity, no achievement.

Then, achievements are gained by means of valuable gems, medicated things, tapas and mantras. These attainments depend on one's own ideas and faith. What is imagined is obtained subsequently as an attainment. There is no purpose in expatiating on this subject. So let us resume our story.

All achievements of man are rendered possible only by the activity of Prana which vibrates along the spinal cord. This prana vibration, in fact, starts from the termination of the spinal cord, situated above the anus and terminates inside the brain matter. This nerve current called prana is constantly flowing up and down the spinal cord and brain which together appear like the musical instrument veena. Like the end of this instrument, the spinal cord also is coiled up at its end. When the upward flow of current terminates in the brain, it is immediately enabled to be responsive to perceptions. When objects are presented to the senses in this state, they are perceived. The downward flow of current sustains the bodily functions. These two currents are immediately accompanied by responsive currents in the entire nervous system enabling messages being sent from

the entire range of body cells to the brain and being responded to from there.

Rama :

When this universe is really one whole permeated by the Chith beyond the range of the senses, how can it be said that this body is sustained by the power of Kundalini (prana) ?

Vasishta :

All these perceptible phenomena take place only in the emptiness of akasa. Their annihilation too are percepts of another kind taking place in Chith. It is the activity or vibration of Chith that is known as prana or Kundalini in the body and is responsible for the five sense perceptions. Percepts arise only when Chith vibrates in the body. These percepts are termed as objects by us. When Chith is in repose no perceptions arise, everything is in a state of dissolution. But both activity and non-activity are mere mental percepts, not realities, as empty of content as akasa, since all are mere appearances like the bubbles on the surface of the water. The vibration of prana in the central spinal cord sets every minute cell of the body into activity like one mighty wave setting in motion multitudes of small waves.

The activity of Chith, known as imagination, functions through the five senses and gives the illusion of world phenomena. It is this five-aspected principle that expands into world-forms such as Devas, Asuras, human species, animals and plant kingdom, as wells as inanimate matter. When this

five-aspected principle manifests itself in the human body, it is called jiva. When it manifests itself in stone, we call it inanimate and when in plants it does so in conformity with their nature. In discussing these matters, we must be careful with the expressions we use. We must understand what the nature or characteristics of a thing is. Cold, heat and similar sensations in opposing pairs indicate the manner in which they were sensed in the beginning. Thereafter this differentiation began to persist by repeated experiences in the same manner. In like manner, all the things of the world took their rise and continue in the same way. This is how Nature and Natural laws came into existence. All these may be termed the expansion of the five-aspected principle.

To proceed further with the Kundalini or prana, it manifests itself in our bodies through the five principal elements. Motion, touch and perception are the three-fold activity taking place in the body and is known as "Kala". When this sort of activity is manifested as imagination, we call it the activity of Chith. As it is the cause of life phenomena, we call it jiva. As it is the cause of thinking process, we call it Manas. In like manner it goes by other names too, such as intellect, ego and so forth, according to the nature of the activity. It is the one Prana that manifests itself in such a variety of ways. It is instrumental in giving rise to perceptions in the body and maintaining the functional activity of the body. Then according to the region of the body and the nature of the bodily function taking place there, it is called variously as Apana, Vyana, Samana and Udana. So long as the

activity of prana is steady and uniform in all parts of the body, health is maintained. If the prana in any particular region is over or under-active, then health is upset therefrom. Hence it is very essential that one puts forth proper effort to maintain the prana's activity normal.

There are two kinds of afflictions to which we are subject, viz: "Adhi" and "Vyadhi". If one is free from them he will be happy. If one is happiness too is conquered one stands Released. Adhi is a mental affliction arising out of vasanas. This can be got rid of only by acquiring knowledge and freeing oneself from the thralldom of vasanas. Vasanas are due to ignorance which gives rise to desire or aversion and the consequent mental delusion and affliction.

Then physical afflictions arise out of various causes, such as from unwholesome food, bad environment, untimely indulgences, bad habits, bad company, bad thoughts, all of which upset the nervous system and thereby give rise to diseases of the body. Now let us consider how to get rid of these afflictions. Adhi is got rid of only by acquiring knowledge by which one becomes established in mental peace and gains a sense of oneness with all. And "Vyadhi" or physical ailment is cured by any one of several ways such as by taking medicines, or leading a life of good and wholesome habits, or by mantras, japa or through money.

Rama :

How can the two afflictions be got rid of by wealth, mantras, japa etc. ?

Vasishtha :

When the light of Chith does not illumine properly then one's activity is not properly directed. It is then like the forest deer running wild when seized by fear. By this, the nerve currents are upset, causing functional disorders and consequent bodily diseases. In this condition, the food that is taken in turns to poison. One in such a state of bodily health, taking to good living habits, or mantras or japa has his mental outlook changed and so enjoys some measure of equanimity of mind; then this re-establishes the nerves to their normal state accompanied by the normal functioning of the bodily organs. Thus the cause and the remedy of Adhi and Vyadhi are as stated above.

Let us now consider the art of flying through space. Those who perform yoga should practice puraka and rechaka in a determined manner, i.e. with respect to the movement of prana and not breath. By these practices, the nerves behave in a normal manner and the central spinal cord will also remain erect. The mind also disentangles itself both from the outer world as well as from the inner world and remains in a state of perfect equanimity. In this state, the mind is in a condition to take any body i.e. a subtle body, not a gross body. In other words, what is indicated here is the intensity of the imaginative faculty, by which alone the mind flies through space as it likes and seizes hold of anything anywhere. It is not possible for the gross body to fly through space. This is a mistaken rendering of the expression used to convey the idea. It is in this

state, wise men are in a position to forecast future events. It is this that is known as flying through space. The Siddhas too have similar perceptions of future events.

Rama :

How do the Siddhas expand themselves into mighty forms or contract themselves to atomic dimensions at will ?

Vasishta :

Before knowing about this subject, it is better you know about another subject. This universe is maintained by the two fundamental ideas "Heat" and "cold". Heat is represented by Sun's function and "cold" by that of the Moon. Besides these two ideas, Sun and Moon are representative of other ideas as well, such as, knowledge and Ignorance, activity and inertia, light and darkness, Chith and achith and such pairs of opposites. Everything comes under such a classification. Even our body is sustained by this opposing pair of states. The entire nervous system as well as all the bodily organisms carry on their functions based on these two states. The body is maintained in a state of normal health only when they are balanced. If anyone condition supervenes, health will be upset. Based on this, there are two sets of nerves, Surya nadi and Chandra nadi (afferent and efferent system).

Then this universe itself is sustained by what is exemplified by the Sun and Moon principles which manifest themselves as mutual cause and effect, like the seed and the tree or light and shadow. This

relationship of cause and effect manifests itself in two ways, viz : (1) both being simultaneously in manifestation and (2) one being manifested by its counterpart being destroyed. The first illustration of the seed and the tree is an instance of cause and effect being simultaneously in evidence, so also light and shadow. Cause and effect are simultaneously perceptible to the senses. If we now consider day and night, wisdom and ignorance, Chith and achith or heat and cold, then in these cases, the one manifests itself only by the other being destroyed. But Logicians do not accept "non-existence" as a test of validity of true knowledge. This is a patently absurd stand since our proposition is substantiated by experience. It is the experience of everyone that both in our bodies as well as in the outside world, if heat is destroyed, cold is manifested and if cold is destroyed, heat manifests itself. Then, the waters of the rivers and seas evaporate due to heat and form into clouds. Water is then returned to the earth. Here the heat itself is the cause of the subsequent cold and this is a case of simultaneous existence of both principles or ideas. But since cold arises only by the loss of heat, the other phenomenon is also illustrated by the same example.

The object of having considered this matter here is to show that these phenomena take place in our own bodies. Our body is a combination of the subtle Chith and gross material substances, or in other words, a combination of hot and cold ideas. The Chith, that may be likened to the rays of the Sun, by its activity, maintains the body that partakes of the

Moon principle. But besides this, the Chith enables the body being perceived when it is itself beyond perception and when it is perceived the body-consciousness disappears. Thus the same sort of activity that takes place in the outside world is carried on in our body also. Like the bee that hovers about the lotus flower, the Chith by its rays excites the brain located inside the head and gives rise to perception and imaginative activity. When the Chith is active the world phenomenon grows and when it is in repose dissolution of the world phenomena takes place.

Another fact to be noticed is that the Sun's rays cannot be perceived by us unless they meet with an obstruction. In the same manner, the light of the Chith cannot be cognised unless it is in association with the gross body.

Let us now revert to your question. What you spoke of, about the attainments of the Siddhas, pertain to their mental capacity and not the physical. The gross body cannot undergo any such transformations. The mind on the other hand can take any form it likes. The mind of ordinary people is always steeped in their own experiences and is unable to imagine anything outside that range. Their minds have a very limited range of activity; their imagination is extremely restricted. The Siddhas, on the other hand have a clear untainted mind which is therefore capable to take any form at will. There is no limit to the capacity of their minds. Further, when the mind is unclouded, the imaginative faculty is very keen and

intense and so ideas are immediately translated into experiences, just as the ideas in the mind of the sculptor are transformed into statues. Imagination gets gradually enriched like a child that grows in its mother's womb. All that has been explained according to the yoga school, can also be explained in terms of the gnana path.

Chith alone is truth and is all. Neither this manifested universe nor the activities that take place in it are real. When Chith indulges itself in imaginative activity it plays the role of a jiva and expands itself, as the visible universe. Just like the ignorant man that sees the ghost which does not exist, the jiva sees the non-existent body as in a dream. When true knowledge is gained imaginative activity subsides and the delusion of the body disappears. When imaginative activity ceases, the jiva subsides in repose like the flame that subsides when oil runs out. Such a jiva experiences immediately whatever it imagines intensely. This happens to even the most ignorant among men. Have we not seen poison being turned to nectar by the force of imagination. If this body is imagined to be a body as we ordinarily know it then it becomes that. If it is imagined to be a delusion arising out of the senses, then it will be experienced as a dream. So the faculty of taking the size of the atom or the mighty universe is in the sphere of imagination only.

To resume our story, Chudala/ practised the art of flying through space for a long time and after she had perfected herself in it she visited many places of interest and many universes in her imagination.

Rama :

If such a wise man as Sikidwaja could not attain a state of highest wisdom by contact with such a guru as Chudalai, how can men of average ability hope to reach that state? If wisdom cannot be obtained even from a guru, how else is one to attain it?

Vasishta :

It is a wrong notion to think that a disciple can attain wisdom by the help of a guru. The teacher-disciple mode of instruction has become sanctified by usage. The teacher can at best show the right means of knowledge. It is then for the disciple to attain wisdom by his own efforts. In this matter generally effort and result have no immediate relationship at all, since unexpected things happen. For instance, there was in days of yore a miserly brahmin who, for some reason, took to digging an abandoned well. After digging for three days and nights, he obtained a Chintamani, which gives whatever one desires. Thereafter the brahmin lived happily. Although, in this case, the effort was directed towards attaining some trifling thing, the result was of stupendous value and came in a most unexpected manner. In like manner, as a result of efforts in the present as well as past lives, wisdom dawns, as the day dawns, in course of time in an unexpected manner. In any case, one cannot attain wisdom merely from the teachings of a guru.

Let us now turn to Sikidwaja and see what he did. As he already had a general distaste to the objects of

the world, he began gradually to dislike his kingly duties as well as family life and desired to lead a lonely life in the forests. When this desire took firm root, he called his wife one day and made known to her his firm resolve. He enjoined her to take over the burden of the state. Chudalai did not appreciate her husband's plans to reach a higher state of wisdom, she considered them to be futile. She told her husband that the way of life he had chosen would be appropriate only in the declining years of one's life and not in the middle age. She told him further that if the king himself forsook his duties, then the subjects would not carry out theirs. Again, without a strong king to rule the subjects, the country would go to ruin. But the king was adamant in his resolve and so did not heed the advice of his wise wife. So he told her finally that a true wife should not stand in the way of her husband working for his own good.

That night, when everyone was sleeping soundly and the city itself had become very quiet, Sikidwaja woke up and quietly got out of his bed without waking up his wife, left the palace and went out of the city. After several days of walking across villages, forests and hills, he was far away from his city. Then one day he came across a delightfully situated grove, with a plentiful supply of clear running water, fruit trees, flowering trees and so forth and immediately made up his mind to settle down there. He built a hut for himself and procured other necessities, such as a walking stick, beggar's bowl, flower basket, a deer-skin and rosary of beads. His daily routine was to get up very early in the morning, take his morning

bath and gather flowers. There-upon he would perform puja, take his food and rest awhile. Then he would again do puja in the evening. Day after day he followed this same monotonous routine for several years.

After 18 years had thus gone by, Chudalai came to a resolution. She thought that her husband might, after all this period of futile striving, be in a ripe condition to follow the path of wisdom and so she made up her mind to visit him in his retreat. But she did not like to visit him as his wife, as she knew that he would not allow himself to be instructed by her. So she took on the form of a young brahmin and went in search of her husband by flying across the skies. When after some time she located his place of abode she halted at a distance so as not to be seen by him and carefully noted the changes wrought on him by time. He had aged very much by reason of his way of life, which was a sad spectacle for Chudalai. At the same time, she was in a way glad at his present state of body as he was more likely to learn the truths of existence. Thereafter Chudalai went to meet her husband.

When Sikidwaja saw the young brahmin he was greatly struck by the extraordinary intelligence beaming from his face and also his charming appearance and thought that the youth might belong to the godly race. Accordingly, he welcomed him with all the respects due to that race, by washing his feet, giving him argya and garlanding him with flowers. Then after enquiring about his health, he requested the youth to let him know who he was.

The brahmin youth replied that his name was Kumbhan and that he belonged to the race of the gods. He also stated that he had risen above all wants in life. As he was wandering aimlessly to spend the time, he happened to come across that way and to see him. So he made up his mind to talk for a while before pursuing his wanderings. On hearing this, Sikidwaja requested him to let him know about his parentage.

Kumbhan : I am the son of the well known rishi Narada who lives in swargaloka and wanders over all the three worlds. One day when he was journeying in the air across the earth, he happened to see accidentally on the banks of the river Ganga some young damsels of the race of gods disporting themselves in the water. One of these comely maidens threw a love-laden look at the Maharishi. He too was enraptured at the sight of the beautiful maiden and so lost his mental balance. Thereafter the damsel conceived and ushered me in this world. At a very young age, my father taught me all the arts and sciences. Through his teachings on the path of knowledge and by my own efforts and enquiry, I attained to that perfect state, which everyone should strive for; I am now in absolute contentment.

Sikidwaja : But is it possible that such a great Maharishi too, who had his senses under control, succumbs to womanly charms?

Kumbhan : In all the three worlds there is no being, coming under the classification of the combination of Manas,—Body principles, that can transgress the laws

of Nature. The body is sustained by the ideas of happiness and misery. It is in fact a product of these ideas and when these ideas are given up, the need for a body disappears. So wise men face both happiness and misery with a like frame of mind. The ignorant people on the other hand are steeped in such ideas like the cloth dipped in a dye. So they are compelled to go through innumerable rounds of birth. If the Chith slips away even for a moment from the state of repose, then it becomes a prey to perceptions and becomes subordinate to them, which indeed is a miserable state. The great rishi Narada too lost his mental equilibrium in a similar way for the time being.

Sikidwaja: How did these ideas of pleasure and pain arise by themselves? And then, even when the cause of these is very remote, how do they affect us?

Kumbhan: These ideas arose spontaneously without any cause. These ideas were so differently perceived at the first perception and thereafter the same perceptions continued to be felt by all creatures, so as to be characterised as natural feelings. Then even though the objects of perception be ever so removed the Chith, otherwise known as jiva, is roused into activity, as soon as it thinks of the objects and it excites the Kundalini that flows in the spinal cord. When a current surge flows in the spinal cord, all the other nerves are similarly excited into activity. This was the experience of Narada also. The phenomenon is similar to what takes place in outside Nature as when a thunder breaks out of the clouds, flowers,

leaves and fruits are shed by the trees. So the bodily activity is sustained by the nervous system. The nerves are roused into activity by the activity of the prana in the central cord. The activity of prana is due to a movement or disturbance in the Chith. This disturbance or movement of the Chith is due to imaginative ideas which do not have a substantial existence and which yet are the cause of all trouble. If such ideas subside, then the jiva attains abiding peace.

Sikidwaja: How came Nature into existence?

Kumbhan: Some spontaneous activity that took place in Brahman in the beginning began to be perceived variously as inanimate matter, shrubs and trees, animals, human beings and so forth. Such original ideas took shape and a sense of reality, by repeated perceptions of one and the same kind. At all times, every first perception is always spontaneous and then what is perceived first is what is repeated subsequently. In course of time, such repeated experiences gather so much strength that the idea cannot be resisted and thereby it establishes itself as a natural phenomenon.

Sikidwaja: Your discourses have greatly clarified my mind; I am eager to hear more and more from you and also about you.

Kumbhan: I got this name Kumbhan because I took my birth and grew in the womb. After I had learned all that had to be learned at the feet of my father, I went to my grandfather Brahma. By his grace and teachings, I reached the highest state of wisdom

and I now continue to be in the same state, now no desire of any kind whatsoever. I have Brahmaloka, but now and then I roam about the earthy regions just to spend the time. Today I happened to see you accidentally and so made up my mind to have a talk with you for a while. Since I am a descendant of the Devas, there is at no time any contact between me and the earthy things, even though I come to the earth. That is why, when I walk about, my feet make no actual contact with the earth.

Sikidwaja: I am supremely happy to know about the highest state of wisdom you have attained. Great souls like you are extremely rare. I consider it my extraordinary luck to have had this visit from you. My purpose in having come to lead a lonely forest life has been fulfilled by my having become acquainted with you.

Vasishta: Kumbhan paid no heed to these words of praise and so to cut short further talk on those lines, he asked Sikidwaja a few questions.

Kumbhan: I narrated to you about myself. Now may I know all about your worthy self? What induced you to take to this forest life?

Sikidwaja: I was a king of a large country and after enjoying all the pleasures of life, I got disgusted with them and so forsook them all and came here to lead this lonely life. I was tired of doing the same thing again and again. Here I am perfectly happy, being free from all worldly cares. I would however request you to tell me about what I ought to know.

Kumbhan: What has to be acquired is only one thing and that is wisdom. In this connection it may interest you to hear the discourses I had from my grandfather Brahma.

Brahma's Discourses: True wisdom is the highest of all states as that alone leads one to Release. The life period is one of continual activity. But wise people carry on these activities unattached, in order to pass the time, whereas ignorant people do them with attachment and so hoard up vasanas and become subordinate to them. When activity is pursued without attachments, then we are not contaminated by the results. Vasanas are the cause of egoism and the consequent ignorance. When ignorance disappears vasanas too are got rid of, which leads to wisdom and Release.

Kumbhan: Hence Oh King! what is the object of living in this lonely forest, instead of devoting your time to the acquisition of wisdom. Even after coming here you have not got rid of samsara. You still have possessions in the shape of the beggar's bowl, deer-skin and so forth. Then, what use is the indulging in of various physical activities day after day. You should on the other hand spend your time more usefully in enquiry and thinking and try to understand what is bondage and what is Release. Then you should also seek the association of the Wise and learn the Truth.

Sikidwaja: Your talks full of great truths give me great comfort and peace of mind. I realise that I had

wasted my life up to now but I am now wiser and realise that true knowledge is what one must strive for. Hereafter you will be my father, mother and guru and so I make my obeisances to you.

Kumbhan: As desired by you, I will discourse to you on the Reality but I must make one stipulation, viz: that you will give a patient hearing and take note of all that I say and act accordingly. You must set aside all your doubts. Like a child that acts according to the directions of the father, you must also respect what I am going to say and hold them as sacred as the Vedas. And now I will relate two short stories which would be applicable to your own actions. Please hear them and implant the moral firmly in your mind.

1. The Brahmin that got Chintamani

It is rare to find a combination of good character and wealth in one person, since the goddesses who bestow these respective gifts are propitiated by entirely opposing qualities of man. If by extraordinary good fortune one is in possession of both, then there is nothing in the world that such a man cannot secure. He can obtain even the Chintamani. But what cannot be attained even with these possessions is the knowledge of the Atman.

One such Brahmin had at one time attained the Chintamani by making strenuous efforts for it. But as he was not firm in his conviction and as he had not realised his own worth, he believed that what had been obtained by him was not Chintamani but some

cheap and worthless stone. So like a fool he discarded it. He believed that he was not qualified to achieve it so quickly and that his scanty efforts were too inadequate for it. Then he continued his efforts and at the end of it obtained a spurious stone but he believed that that was Chintamani and was very happy. Having seemingly obtained that which gave all that one wanted, he did not care for anything else and so he retired to a forest to live all alone. How can there be any salvation for such a big fool, who would maintain that 8 was 6 or that a wicked man was good?

2. The elephant that lost its independence

In one of the forests of the Vindhya mountains, there was once a huge elephant that was like a king amidst all kings of elephants. By virtue of its strength and prowess it led an absolutely carefree life. But all that strength proved unavailing before a hunter who once managed to capture it, so that the elephant not only lost its independence but had to submit itself to being tethered and to obey the behests of its master.

In this state of captivity the elephant, which had all along been striving to regain its freedom, made more than the usual efforts one day and succeeded in breaking the chain by which it was bound and fled from the place of captivity. But the hunter, as soon as he came to know about the escape of the animal, went in search of it and having located its whereabouts after some time, got up a tree beneath which it

was standing and jumped on its head. Unfortunately he slipped and dropped near the forelegs of the animal. Animal though it was, it took pity on the helpless man and so without crushing him to death, as it might well have done, it went its way, content with the freedom it had regained.

But the hunter would not rest so content and so he went in pursuit of the animal again. Then, locating its whereabouts, he dug a moat all round and covered it up. The unsuspecting animal soon enough wandered over the moat and dropped into it. In a little while it was again in captivity.

Slkidwaja: May I know the moral from these two short stories?

Kumbhan: These stories illustrate your own attitude to life. Like one who has studied all the shastras and become a scholar without practising the truths learned therefrom, so had you likewise failed to derive the benefits arising from the possession of Chintamani. This Chintamani confers on one whatever he desires, so also renunciation. Complete renunciation is what is known as Chintamani. You had renounced no doubt wife, wealth and also a kingdom very easily which is akin to the possession of Chintamani. But you did not obtain the mental equanimity which must have resulted from such a renunciation. You let go the Chintamani that came into your hands and tried to make further efforts after some higher status, not realising that the state you were in was higher than the one you were after. If Chith slips away from its natural state of

repose, which we call imagination, then it gets entangled in endless activity. So, until imaginative activity subsides no mental peace can be secured. Now as a result of your further efforts, you got only a worthless stone, not even a good imitation stone. What you experience here, in this forest area, is only exposure to more rigorous wind, rain and sun than in the city. You took to performing tapas in order to reach a higher status. What does one secure from such tapas? It is just a way of escape from one set of habits or vasanas to another. What can one expect from mere physical activities which constitute tapas? You may take it from me that it is mere waste of time and energy. You may implant these ideas deeply in your mind.

Considering now the other story, you are the mighty elephant illustrated in it. That elephant became a slave of the mahout and you of ignorance. The elephant was tethered by a strong chain, while you were tethered by likes and dislikes. But while the chain will wear away day after day, desires tend only to grow day after day. As the elephant broke loose from its chain and attained freedom, so also did you obtain freedom by breaking away from all worldly ties. But both of you failed to retain the freedom so secured. The elephant refrained from killing its enemy when the latter was at its mercy, so it lost its precious freedom again. Likewise you too released yourself from the hold of ignorance, but instead of destroying it altogether, you allowed it to sprout again. The mahout dug a moat all round the habitat of the elephant and covered it with green leaves and

grass to cheer the elephant. In like manner, the range discarded by you subordinated you to the abyss of desires by being known as *tapas*. This story of the elephant well illustrates your foolish actions.

Your wife Chudalai was a very wise woman. Why did you not pay heed to her words of advice and wisdom? She reached the state of wisdom very speedily. Even though you might not have cared to follow her path, did you at least go along your chosen path to its end? No: because, after deciding on the path of renunciation, you did not renounce everything.

Sikidwaja: I renounced my kingdom, my house, my wife and all. How can you say that I had not renounced everything?

Kumbhan: But Kingdom, wife and others do not belong to you. What relation is there between them and you? You have not renounced anything that belongs to you.

Sikidwaja: All right, this forest area, tree and shrubs have also now been given up by me. Would I now be considered to have given up all?

Kumbhan: These too do not belong to you.

Sikidwaja: Well, all that I now have is this hut, beggar's bowl, stick and the deer-skin. I am giving up even these now. I have then nothing to call my own in this world.

Kumbhan: Oh, King! you have not given up anything at all, since you have not given up that which is the source of all things. Only if that be given up, you would be considered to have given up all. You would then enjoy abiding peace.

Sikidwaja: There is only left my physical body to call my own. I am prepared to forsake even that by falling in the adjoining pit and destroying it.

Kumbhan: Oh King! Stop! Why do you wish to destroy your body? The body is an inert substance, devoid of perceptions and by destroying it nothing is gained. When the wind blows, the flowers and fruits of the trees drop down and in like manner the body is dependent on another being and would be discarded in proper time. It is that being, by which the body is set into action, that must be given up. Until the activity of that being subsides, nothing is gained by the destruction of the body. If this body is destroyed, it secures another body for itself. It is this being, which is the source of all, that must be given up and only then can you be said to have given up everything.

Sikidwaja: What is that being? Will you kindly explain about it to me in detail?

Kumbhan: That being is known as *jiva*, *prana* and so forth. It is neither gross nor subtle. Its function is to be constantly spinning round like a whirlpool. This is popularly known as *chitta* or *manas*. The body is the place of abode which it seeks for itself. Just like the seed being the cause of the tree, birth

and death are due to manas. As long as it is active, misery is the only outcome; if it is inactive one enjoys bliss, and one is rid of both adhi and vyadhi. More-over the sense of duality is shed and the unity of existence will be realised. The cause of the unity of phenomena lies in the "self" idea. This idea in conjunction with the mind phenomenon expands itself as the world phenomenon. This "self" idea stands distinctly apart, not only from total renunciation but also from the oneness of existence. When this "self" idea thus stands by itself, all objects disappear from its ken as before a lamp without oil. Then in the blaze of pure Intelligence, objects are revealed as by a lamp fed with oil. If objective sense be shed then what is left is the "self" idea. In total renunciation what is left behind is the effulgence of Intelligence. If one takes to the essence of absolute renunciation, the cycle of births and deaths comes to an end. Just as there is no place for a jewel in a box that is full, so also is there no place for the jewel of Atma if the state of emptiness, resulting from total renunciation, be not made available. So, may you rest in peace in the state resulting from total renunciation.

Sikidwaja : Is it not an impossible task to renounce this mind? In the akasa of the heart, this mind is ever active like a monkey; how can one get rid of such a mind? The fishes know only how to get caught in a net but not to extricate themselves from it. So it is with the mind too. So, if you explain to me the nature of this mind, then I can find out the means of renouncing it.

Kumbhan : The mind phenomenon is revealed only in the shape of vasanas or deep rooted desires. In fact, mind phenomenon is otherwise called vasanas. A wise man gives them up in a trice while for an ignorant man it is impossible.

Sikidwaja : What I think is that one can even swallow a sword without touching the teeth, but it is impossible to quell the activity of the mind. This mind pervades the whole brain and hovers about it like a bee around the lotus and I am not aware of the means of renouncing it.

Kumbhan : After everything is given up, pure activity alone remains. Then if memory too is given up, this activity also ceases. So say the wise and the far-seeing.

Sikidwaja : If activity ceases, then one becomes insensible to everything. Then how can one enjoy that state?

Kumbhan : For the chitta, which is akin to a tree full of branches, leaves, flowers etc., the "self-idea" is the seed. When this seed is uprooted, the state is akin to non-existence. That is the state one should achieve.

Sikidwaja : What is this activity? What is the cause of that activity? Then what are its trees, branches and so on?

Kumbhan : Atma is the source of all phenomena. When the sense of duality is perceived in it, the "self"-idea intensifies. This is the cause of the tree

known as chitta. If in this state a sense of certainty is obtained, it is known as buddhi (intellect). Buddhi is also the cause for imagination which is another name for chitta. It is also called manas or jiva. But all these, in truth, arose in the emptiness of akasa. In conjunction with the flux of time it ripens to vasanas and yields fruits in the shape of happiness and misery.

Sikidwaja: If so, how should I get rid of this "self" idea which is the root cause of all troubles?

Kumbhan: if you make the enquiry "who am I" deeply and seriously, you will be successful in getting rid of it.

Sikidwaja: I have made this enquiry for a long time. I know that none of the objects, nor the body, nor mind, nor intellect, is the "self". "I" cannot be the cause of this insentient gross world. But I do not know how to rid myself of it.

Kumbhan: There is no result without a preceding cause. One would see two moons only if his vision is defective. But it is impossible to determine the cause for the rise of this "self" idea. So, the mind phenomenon which it gives rise to cannot also be said to have a real existence. That is to say, we have to admit that mind has only an apparent existence.

Sikidwaja: But I believe that perception is the cause of the rise of the "self" idea. When the chittam indulges in activity, all this misery is the outcome. So I would like to be released from this activity.

Kumbhan: I admit that cogniser and cognition are bound together as cause and effect. You must however grant that what is non-existent cannot be deemed to be a cause.

Sikidwaja: Why? Cannot the objects, which have an existence, be the cause for perceptions? Just as the trees that are set into motion by the invisible air, so also are the body and objects of perception. We cannot deny a state of existence to this body and objects of the world. Nor can we deny reality to our acts, their results and our experiences of pleasure and pain.

Kumbhan: If some result is perceived without a cause for it, then what we perceive is an illusion and not a real object. Although we see a mirage we do not admit of its reality. In the same way, the objects of perception are our illusions. The mere experience of perceptions cannot establish the reality of objects. This body of ours with its five-fold sense perceptions has also become an object of perception only due to our ignorance.

Sikidwaja: Is not the cause of our body our father?

Kumbhan: This will give rise to an endless series of questions. Just as the seed is the cause of the tree, objects, as well as our activities, must no doubt have a cause. But when this cause cannot be determined at all, then these results lose their air of reality. So what we perceive have the same grade of reality as the offspring of a barren woman or the mirage.

Sikidwaja: Why cannot the most ancient father of all, i.e. Brahma be the cause of all our existences?

Kumbhan: Even for Him, non-existence is the true nature of his existence. An idea having no cause can never have a state of existence. If it appears as a self-caused Being, even that is an illusion. So you had better get rid of all these delusions and stand steadfast in your own true nature, viz. Atma.

Sikidwaja: If everything, from a speck of dust to Brahma, is our delusion, how, then do they cause pleasure and pain to us?

Kumbhan: Our own imaginative ideas are the cause of our pleasure and pain. If water becomes too cold, it turns to ice and serves even as a tool. In the same way, if our ideas take deeper and deeper root, our minds get clouded and the ideas take name and form and cause misery. If imaginative activity subsides, knowledge dawns and the delusion of objects disappears and one is restored to his true and original state. This imaginative activity will subside only by enquiring into the nature of the "self".

Sikidwaja: Why cannot the Atma be considered as the cause of all this universe and its contents?

Kumbhan: But this Atma denies the principle of cause and effect and so it cannot be deemed to be the cause for anything. What is one and undivided and unchanging cannot give rise to anything different from itself. What is as good as nothing cannot be the cause for the "things" of the world.

Vasishtha: On hearing these words of wisdom, Sikidwaja reflected over them for a while and sat mute at great peace with himself. Arousing himself after a while from this state, he spoke words of praise to Kumbhan and expressed his great gratitude to him. Thereafter it appeared as if he would go into the state of samadhi. Kumbhan, on noticing this, sought to prevent him from it and then began speaking to him again a few words about Atma.

Kumbhan: All beings that are perceptible to the senses are liable to destruction, whereas Atma is for ever the mute witness, though it is the essence of everything in all states. It can be said to be the essence of existence. As the essence of Intelligence, it produces illusions to the sense perceptions. It can be thought of either as "No-thingness" or as "Fullness". It gives the appearance of an atom among atoms and also immensity amidst immensity.

In the state of perfect equanimity, when the idea of the "self" arises, it appears to be the all-embracing being, known as Virata-Purusha. Just as we do not differentiate between air and its movement, so also should we not make any distinction between Non-Being and the "Self" perception. The waters of the ocean give the appearance of waves in terms of time and space. The Atma is the Source of the world phenomenon without any attributable cause. When we see the shape of the bangles in gold, there is a cause for this appearance, but we cannot trace any cause for the appearance of the world phenomenon in

Brahman. But any such world phenomenon that is perceived in Brahman can be none other than Brahman, since nothing else can possibly take its rise in it. So everything at all times is nothing but Brahman.

Since Atma is of this nature, it is not possible for perceptions like "self", "world" etc. to take their rise in it. So "Chith" and the gross perceptual world did not exist at any time. All objects of perception disappear when probed with a discerning eye. So "Chitta", "self" "world"; all these are none other than Brahman.

Sikidwaja: It is now clear to me that Chith is non-existent but please elucidate it further, so that I may have a clear grasp of the idea.

Kumbhan: This Chith did not exist in any shape at any time. If it appears to exist, then it is due to our deluded senses. How can one presume to trace the things of the imagination like the "world" "self" etc. in the Brahman, which is of the nature of pure Intelligence? So, all that are perceptible can be none other than Brahman. The illusions that we experience arise out of vasanas and if vasanas subside these illusions cease to be cognised. So, Chith is also an illusion. In the state of ignorance, Brahman is perceived as world phenomenon. This is the truth. And the gist of all shastras is also this and no other opinion or explanation will be appropriate.

Sikidwaja: I am now freed from delusions and I have learned the great truth and all my doubts have

vanished. I am greatly indebted to you for all this. I would like to hear more from you on the same subject.

Kumbhan: Imaginative activity arises spontaneously in the vast and profound stillness of Brahman. The first of such activity in the shape of "I" thought is the cause of bondage. The opposite of the "I" thought which negates it, is the road to Release. Imaginative activity strengthens the bondage to the "self-idea," whereas giving up this activity loosens the bond. Thus bondage and Release are only states of mind, but they do not affect Brahman which is always in an unchanging state. What arises, in such a Brahman, in the shape of thought of "self" "world" etc. cannot be anything else but Brahman. Although this world perception assumes variegated forms by the multiplicity of words, they all point to Brahman alone as their import.

Vasishta: At the end of this discourse, Sikidwaja was rapt in silence and sat like a statue. He was enjoying perfect bliss and was not alive to the external world. After a while he began extolling Kumbhan but the latter, putting a stop to it, continued his discourse.

Kumbhan: One, who discards worldly pleasures, restrains his senses and is contented, is in a fit condition to strive to attain wisdom. Just as one would bleach the cloth properly before dyeing it, so should one train the mind before taking to the path of gnana. Then knowledge dawns by itself in the course of one's effort; it is not a thing which can be taught. When the activity of the Chith ceases, that is an indication of the state of knowledge, but when it is still

active it is a sign that ignorance has not been dispelled. So long as the sense of duality persists, one is in a state of ignorance but when one feels the unity of existence, he is said to be rooted in knowledge.

The Jivan-Mukhtas are in this state. They are freed from the cycle of cause-effect phenomenon i.e. birth and death, like a seed that is burnt up which can no longer sprout again. When one pursues activity without attachment, then the cause for the continuance of the life process disappears. Although they may appear to be pursuing various activities, they will not be deemed to be active since they are devoid of any mental reactions in what they do. Such a mind is said to be satwic.

Thus the world phenomenon must be considered to be Chith itself. When our attention is fixed on the waves of the ocean, the reality of water behind them is not realised. In like manner, when our attention is turned to the active aspect of Chith, ignorance and world phenomena are alone the result. But if our attention be turned to the opposite aspect i.e. tranquility, then peace and a feeling of oneness will prevail.

Vasishta : After the explanations, Kumbhan said that it was time for him to return to Devaloka as his father Narada would be waiting for him. After saying this, he immediately vanished. Sikidwaja could not even utter a word in reply and so remained in his seat for some time thinking of Kumbhan. He was lost in appreciation of his sparkling intelligence, wisdom and sweet speech. By his discourses he had profited greatly and had gained wisdom and mental peace. But on

deeper reflection, he realised that Kumbhan could be considered to be the cause for his gaining wisdom only nominally ; for no one can gain anything from anybody until he himself is ripe for it. With gathering experience, many changes such as this happen to everyone.

Then gradually all thoughts subsided. The body and the senses too quietened themselves ; mind stood still and he appeared to be no more than a statue, which state is known as Nirvikalpa Samadhi. To turn to Kumbhan, he returned to his palace taking care to assume his natural form on the way. Chudalai spent three days in attending to the duties of the state and then turned back to see her husband in her assumed form. Sikidwaja was still in the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. She could not wake him up by any normal means. Even when he was physically shaken up, he would not wake up. Kumbhan wondered whether life was extinct but on closer examination he found him to be alive. His mind was transfixed in the blaze of illumination. The only way to rouse such a person to a consciousness of the external world is for oneself to take on the universal aspect, like the person lost in contemplation, and then stir up his mind. This was done by Kumbhan with success.

When Sikidwaja woke up to body-consciousness he saw Kumbhan before him at which he was greatly pleased. He welcomed him and extolled him for what he had done to him. Like truly great men he had voluntarily taken on himself the task of uplifting him, Sikidwaja said.

Kumbhan : Oh, King! Are you steadfast in the state of mental peace you have attained? After I went to Devaloka I realised that I could not continue to stay there for long, since I have no other relative or friend so dear to me as you. I find this place far more congenial to me than Devaloka.

Sikidwaja : I believe I am having the reward of my efforts in previous births in the shape of your friendship and appreciation. I am now firmly established in mental equanimity and happiness. I have no wants of any sort. I think that even Devaloka cannot offer any charms to compare with those of this spot. So you too may decide to stay away here. This is a most enchanting spot with beautiful groves studded thickly with trees, plants, sweet scented flowering creepers, fruit laden trees, delightful running water and so forth. I will minister to your wants. Please then make up your mind to take your abode here.

Vasishtha : Talking in this manner for several hours, they roamed about aimlessly till they came to an even more enchanting place, than the one they had left, and then decided to take their residence there itself. The beauty of the surroundings combined with the soft and gentle breeze laden with the sweet scents of the flowers stirred up feelings of love natural to a woman. Kumbhan felt that since both of them were not yet old and could still enjoy life's blessings and while the husband was with her and everything around was so congenial for enjoyment, it would be meaningless to deny the physical

body its natural needs. It is a crime to deprive the body of its normal functions as it will be against the laws of Nature. It is stupid too. The body and the sense organs must carry on their normal functions, otherwise they would degenerate. With thoughts like these running through his mind, Kumbhan came to a new resolution and then he addressed Sikidwaja as follows:—

Kumbhan : I have now to get back to Devaloka as there will be the usual meeting of the Devas in this month of Chitra during the waxing fortnight of the Moon. As my father would also be waiting for me there, I must go thither. But I would return as soon as possible and I request you to stay on here till then.

Vasishtha : After uttering these words, he flew away along the path of the skies. There was a rain of flowers on Sikidwaja from the sky. Sikidwaja, who thought that this was done by the Devas, was looking long and intently in the direction in which Kumbhan sped along.

Kumbhan however threw off his guise as soon as he was out of sight and went to the palace. After attending to the duties of the state in a few days, Chudalai resumed her disguise and went back to see Sikidwaja, intending to play a ruse.

The frame of mind in which Chudalai found herself and the new resolutions which she intended to put into effect would be approved by all right thinking and

wise people. When Chith is in association with a physical body, the functions ordained by Nature should be duly carried out and not repressed. The discarding of such duties is not profitable in any manner. On the other hand, it is positively harmful. Such functions have been ordained by Nature both to the ignorant as well as the wise. But whereas the wise perform their duties in conformity with Nature, the ignorant transgress the laws of Nature. The wise preserve a balanced state of mind, whatever they may be doing, whereas the ignorant people react violently to circumstances. So the natural way of living is to conform to Nature's laws and at the same time to maintain a balanced mind.

Kumbhan's face reflected the state of his mind and Sikidwaja, having noted it, asked him why he had a ruffled mind. Kumbhan put on a dejected mien and replied that while returning from Devaloka he underwent a strange experience which was the cause of his sadness. When Sikidwaja requested Kumbhan to tell him what had happened, the latter proceeded to tell him the experience.

He said that while he was coming back to earth very early in the morning, travelling along with the rays of the sun, he came across masses of clouds and amidst them he saw the great sage Durvasa. Knowing that he was going to the river Ganga for performing his morning duties, he had called out to him and made his obeisances and received his blessings. Then, as the sight of the sage amidst the clouds appeared to him like a dancing girl clad in thin garments,

he had told him so. The sage was greatly enraged at what he thought was an affront and so had cursed him to become a woman by night as befitted the nature of the insult. So he had to return with the curse hanging on him. He further stated that he was worried over this event as he was ashamed to appear before his father and the Devas disfigured by the breasts of a woman. She might be the cause of quarrels between the Devas and the mortals. He had now become a plaything of men. Sikidwaja, on hearing these words from Kumbhan, consoled him, without himself suffering any reaction. Sikidwaja pointed out that gnani's like him should not be perturbed by such incidents in life. "What if the body meets with whatever Fate has ordained for it? That should not disturb one's mind."

Kumbhan pretended to have been consoled by this. Then as the sun began setting, he gradually transformed himself into a woman. Each little transformation brought forth a wave of shyness which brought about further transformation. In a little while, there stood before Sikidwaja a most enchanting woman that would have set the hearts of even the Devas aflame. This change of sex in Kumbhan did not interfere with their daily duties or observances. As man and woman they spent their leisure hours in talks about Atman as usual.

Some days later, Kumbhan told Sikidwaja that he had come to a new resolution viz: to live a life as befitted their sexes. Since she had to be a woman by night, it would not be improper if the functions assigned by nature to the physical body were carried out.

To fulfil this, she said that she had resolved to marry him. Sikidwaja raised no objection to this proposal, as he was unconcerned about any mode of living and so he told her that she might do as she pleased.

Since the next day was a very auspicious one, they made all necessary preparations for the marriage and married each other before the god of Agni. From that day onwards they lived as man and wife like Rathi and Manmatha or Parvati and Parameswara, discoursing about Atman. Kumbhan took the name of Madanika for his womanly form.

After living for some time as husband and wife, Madanika wanted to find out if her husband had developed any attachment to the pleasures of life. So one day she created an illusion by her yogic powers, by which Sikidwaja saw that Indra, the lord of the devas, had come to see him with a large retinue. He was indeed very much surprised at this visit. All the same, Sikidwaja received the god with due courtesy and composure and asked him what had induced the Lord of the devas to visit him in his secluded spot. Indra replied that one reason for his visit was to take him to Indraloka, so that he might enjoy the heavenly pleasures as a fitting reward for his attainments. Moreover the apsarases who had also heard about his greatness, were also eager to see him. If then he elected to come to Devaloka, by adopting anyone of the Siddhis he could enjoy all the pleasures of his kingdom, instead of wasting away his life in this lonely spot. Further, since he had become a jivan-mukhta it was immaterial for him how he led his life. Having heard

these words of the leader of the devas, Sikidwaja replied that he did not feel the need to go to any particular spot to enjoy heavenly bliss, as he could obtain it wherever he was. Indra appreciated his resolve and after having blessed him vanished from his sight.

Madanika was satisfied that her husband had reached the highest state of attainment and had no kind of want or desire. Still she wanted to put him to a further crucial test and so contrived a fresh means of testing. One evening, when Sikidwaja was returning to his hut at dusk, after finishing the evening ablutions, Madanika arranged another illusion. Sikidwaja saw, while crossing the dense grove which lay on his way, a bed of flowers exquisitely laid out and on it Madanika embracing a clandestine lover very passionately. Such a sight, however, made no impression on Sikidwaja. He thought that there was no harm in anybody fulfilling his or her desire. But, lest they should be disturbed in their enjoyment, he turned away and walked briskly homewards. A little later Madanika returned to him, as if bent with shame. Though Sikidwaja noticed it, he was unmoved in any manner and then he addressed Madanika gently thus :—

Sikidwaja : Madanika ! why did you return so soon ? Did you quench your desire completely ? Did you happen to think that I might feel sorry about it ? I am not displeased about it. Whatever pleases you, pleases me too. So you may return to your lover,

who might have been greatly disappointed at your sudden departure and satisfy his wants, while fulfilling your own desire too.

Madanika I realise that I had committed a great offence. I was overpowered by passion. You are no doubt aware that women are ten times more sensitive than men. Moreover I was all alone and hence was a weakling then. However much the women folk may boast of their prowess before they are snared by a man, as soon as they get into their hands their minds undergo a transformation. Moreover I was carried away by force and so I request you to pardon me.

Sikidwaja: Oh Madanika! I am neither sorry nor disappointed in any manner. Both Kumbhan and myself are dearest of friends and have crossed the borders of the sense of duality. You have come out being out of the curse of the great sage Durvasa. No blame can attach to you if you fulfilled your desire. Since your lover and you love each other, you should not discard this great love. There is no greater thing on earth than the love in which one feels happy in the happiness of the other. So you may rejoice your lover. I would continue to have the same feelings towards you as ever, but since what you did is against worldly ways, we can no longer be as man and wife.

Vasishta Chudalai was now fully convinced that her husband was now equal to the Lord Paramahansa Himself and so made up her mind to reveal her true self. Accordingly she changed her form so

gradually, the Madanika form disappearing as the Chudalai form reappeared little by little as if one form grew out of the other. In a few moments there stood before Sikidwaja his long-deserted wife Chudalai in all her glory. Sikidwaja was surprised beyond measure.

Sikidwaja I cannot understand what you stand before me now. Would you kindly explain to me? Your form, beauty, gait and conduct, all remind me of my wife Chudalai.

Chudalai: I am none other than your dear wife, you need have no doubts about it. The forms of Kumbhan and Madanika were assumed by me with a purpose, namely, to direct you to the right path of gnana. Without heeding my words, you chose to follow blindly the path of routine rites and observances that lead nowhere. So I had to assume these forms to discourse to you on the path of knowledge. You can ascertain these through your own sixth sense now.

Vasishta: At once Sikidwaja closed his eyes and went into a deep reverie for a while. He recalled everything that happened from the instant he left his wife till the present moment and when he realised their true import, he opened his eyes and with a combined feeling of pleasure and surprise, he embraced his wife with fondness. They were thus locked together as devotedly as the mongoose. Then after a while Sikidwaja spoke thus:

Sikidwaja: I am really the most blessed of all persons. To you goes the glory of having blest me with inner vision when I was in clouds of ignorance. Right knowledge is the greatest of all achievements. You have imparted that to me and enabled me to cross the ocean of samsara. No achievement can be greater than this. This has been made possible for me because of my having had you for my wife. They are most blest who are able to get wives from reputable families, since through them the husband secures happiness in this life as well as in the next. Among created beings a worthy woman is the grandest achievement. She is the one to be worshipped. But you are a shining star among such venerable beings: In you are gathered together all that captivates men's hearts, beauty of form, sparkling intelligence, right conduct, charm of manner that must win every heart, knowledge, zeal in pursuing any kind of activity and above all, innate goodness of heart. All these ennobling qualities have come to reside in you. How-ever can I repay the deep debt I owe you? The best that I can do would still be inadequate to recompense the services rendered by you to me.

Chudalai: You do not have to worry about the debt, since by uplifting you I only relieved myself of my own misery, for I found you wallowing in ignorance, which was a source of great sorrow to me. So, by imparting knowledge to you I secured only my own happiness. Thus you are under no obligation to me.

But I wish to know one thing from you, viz: whether you are steadfast in the present frame of mind,

without wants of any kind. Further, I would like to know how you propose to spend the future.

Sikidwaja: I am now freed completely from desire and aversion and have perfect equanimity of mind. There is nothing that I either want or do not want. Whatever comes to me unsolicited I take or do in perfect contentment. I am in a state akin to that of Brahma, Vishnu, or Siva. I am established in my own "Self". I see my "self" in everything. When the rays of the sun spread out without any obstruction, then nothing is visible although the rays are all-pervasive. So is my vision of the world. I reached this state by your unique efforts. You are my most revered guru and I make my obeisances to you. And now as regards the future, I have no plans of my own. Whatever you choose, I shall tread in the same path.

Chudalai: We are both in the state of jivan-Muktas. So we are free from wants of any kind. Nor do we have dislikes either. We are just in the state of "Pure Existence" that is common to past, present and future. So let us complete the task of kingship that came to us unsolicited. Do not however think I have the least desire for a kingdom or the pleasures of life. I only wish to avoid seeking a new way of life different from the one that came to us unsought. So let us go back to our old home.

Sikidwaja: As I told you already, I shall gladly accept whatever mode of life you decide on. I shall

be a shadow of yourself. There is no woman to equal you in all the three worlds in the past, present or future. Arundathi, Sasi, Gauri, Gayathri, Saraswati, all these jewels among womanhood rolled into one, cannot compare with you. So I have no other wish than to do what you like. We shall then return to our kingdom.

Vasishta : When they had decided on this course, they anointed themselves as King and Queen in their own minds. Then Chudalai, by the exercise of her powers, called into being a large army and accompanied by it they left the forest and proceeded towards their kingdom. The news of the King's home-coming with all the elaborate paraphernalia reached the ears of the city and at once the ministers and other officers of the state gathered together the state army and went to greet the King and Queen.

The city went into continual rejoicing for seven days. Thereafter Sikidwaja attended to the affairs of state and ruled his kingdom wisely and well for the good of the subjects; but all the time he continued to be in the state of jivan-Mukhta. After reigning for 10000 years he attained Videha Mukhti.

Thus anyone who follows the path pursued by Sikidwaja is sure to become a jivan-Mukhta. Again Kacha, the son of Brahaspati, the Deva-guru, also followed a like path and became a jivan-Mukhta. Let me narrate his story.

THE STORY OF KACHA

Kacha, the son of Brahaspati, soon after he emerged from his boyhood and in continuation of his study of the shastras, engaged himself in the effort to free himself from the cycle of samsara. Not having been able to come to any conclusions, he thought of going to a guru. Who was more fitted to teach him than his own father, who was the most enlightened among the beings and who was the master of thought and speech? So he went to his father and put him a few questions. The principal one among them was how mortal beings, strung like beads in a thread known as jiva, could escape from the cycle of births and deaths. Brahaspati answered all his questions by a single word, viz: total self-denial.

Treating the words of his father as sacred, as the wisdom of the Vedas, he retired to a forest and engaged himself in enquiry and contemplation. After eight years of hard labour, he reached no conclusions and so he went back to his father, told him all that he had done and thought about and finally said that he had not obtained contentment. Brahaspati again told him that only by total self-denial he could reach his goal and that there was nothing else to say. Kacha went back to the forest, discarded his stick, beggar's bowl and even his loin cloth and plunged into enquiry. After a period of three years, he had not reached equanimity of mind. So he went back to his father and told him again about his failure. His father explained to him that, "discarding everything" means discarding the chitta. Kacha went back to his forest and tried in

vain to seek out the chitta. Not having been able to find it, he went once again to his father to enquire where this chitta was located. "Love of self" is what is called chitta said Brahaspati. "Then it is impossible to get rid of it" replied Kacha and requested his father to let him know how he could accomplish it.

Brahaspati: Is it difficult to pluck the flower from the tree or wink your eyes? So easy it is to get rid of this love of "Self". I will tell you the means of achieving it. It is because of our ignorance that things of the world assume an air of reality. When knowledge dawns things lose this air of reality. Like the child that sees a ghost or like mistaking the rope for a snake we get this love of "self".

Non-existent things appear to us to have an existence, in the same manner that we can see two moons when the vision is defective, so do we get this "self" love by reason of our ignorance. This "self" cannot be considered as either "real", or "unreal".

Reality is one, persisting in the past, present and future. It is the cause of all perceptions. It is that which pervades everything at all times. Like waves that form on the surface of the ocean, beings arise out of it. Such an all-embracing Being cannot be confined in any particular space. Even time and space are the forms of this universal Being. So if one identifies himself with this Being always, then this present false idea of "self" would disappear. In the spring season various trees and plants put forth their blossoms but they are all the essence of the spring season, so also do all creatures spring from this Being.

While this is the Truth, people think that they can keep the Atma confined within the body as jewels in a jewel box. But as often as it is confined so often does it merge itself in the all-embracing Atma. Can one confine akasa in a little space? While the bodily frame continually perishes, the Chith always pervades the body and everything outside it. How then can we consider ideas about birth, death, time, space, etc. as real? These are delusions of our minds. If then ideas like "existence" be given up then the "self" idea too will be shed away.

Vasishta: Kacha thereafter went back to the forest and in a short time became a jivan-Mukhta. If we make further enquiry into the nature of the Atma it is evident that the original pulsation or movement that arose in the Atma in the shape of Manas cannot be different from the Atma. Like the scent which is associated with flowers, like the rays of the Sun which are not different from the Sun, or the flame from the fire or the waves from the water, so also can Manas not be different from Brahman. But most people forget the basis or background of water when they see the waves. Only those who realise both simultaneously are said to have true vision.

Manas has no form. It is just movement, motion or change. It is also called imagination or thought or idea when it is engaged in the act of creating. When however it associates itself with its own creations it becomes a perception. Perception gives rise to enjoyment. The act of creation in the shape of ideas result in the things of the world. It is in this manner that water, earth

plants, animals, manas, buddhi, "self" etc. were created. They arose as ideas and continue to be ideas even now. It is only non-existent things that create in us the illusion of existence and a sense of reality and what truly exists, which is the Reality, appears non-existent. In appreciation of these truths, the best course is to observe total mounam. This state is also designated as the Great Doing the great Enjoying and the great Abstaining, as followed by the Rishi Bhringi.

BHRINGI

This rishi was living on the slopes of Mount Meru. Although he was greatly desirous of crossing the ocean of samsara, he did not know how to achieve it and so was greatly concerned about it. So he went to Lord Parameswara Himself and told Him about his distressed state and implored Him to point out the way to attain salvation. The Lord, taking pity on him, discoursed to him as follows :

Parameswara : Discard all doubts and with a Courage bordering on recklessness, be a Great Doer a great Enjoyer and a great Renouncer ; you will then be successful in your attempts. These are inter-related states since without a Doer there can be no enjoyment. If both these are achieved one is established in great Renunciation. To achieve these you have to pursue the following path :

1. Discard the ideas of right and wrong and do whatever has to be done when it comes unsolicited.

2. Likes and dislikes happiness and misery, fruitful and fruitless, all such ideas should be given up and one should pursue only such activity as comes unsolicited.
3. Observe the great Silence, discard the idea of "self" and enjoy what comes unsolicited with a balanced mind.
4. Whatever you may do, do it without any attachment or aversion as if you were just a witness to the act.
5. Whatever you may do, let there be neither zeal nor disinclination, neither a sense of pleasure nor pain. Remain unaffected.
6. Look on birth, existence and death alike.

With such ideas, if you realise that all is Brahman and there is nought but Brahman, then that is the state of Release.

Vasishta : These truths were taken to heart by the rishi Bhringi and he faithfully followed them.

Rama : By what indications are men in this state recognised ?

Vasishta : By their mien, talk and behaviour, they are to be recognised. They are always composed, never hasty nor tardy in doing anything and maintain a balanced mind in every circumstance.

ABOUT IKSHVAKU

Vasishta : Let me tell you Ram! how the founder of your family, Ikshvaku, learned the path of knowledge. After carrying the burden of kingship for a long time meritoriously, he began to reflect one day about the flood tides of samsara. "Is all this real or unreal, how did they originate? Is there an end to it?" These were the questions that weighed his mind. However much he thought over them he could come to no conclusions.

So he went to Brahmaloaka to seek the aid of Manu, the first and foremost among men, and after telling him about his state of mind implored him to teach him the path of wisdom. Manu took pity on the king, saw that the latter was ripe for being taught and discoursed to him as follows :

MANU'S DISCOURSE

The world of the senses is entirely illusory, like Gandharva city (the city seen amidst clouds) or the water in the mirage, although they appear real. Reality is only that which is beyond the five senses and the mind. The shadows or images that appear in it are experienced by us as things. Just a pulsation occurring in Brahman sets up these varied phenomena called things or creatures of the world. In truth however, there is naught but Brahman in all this world. So, ideas denoted by expressions like bondage and Release have no meaning; they are empty words. Expressions like one two etc. are also meaningless.

Discarding all such useless ideas, you had better hold on to the Truth or Brahman and thereby attain mental peace.

Like waves arising on the surface of the ocean, jivas spring up in the all-embracing Consciousness when there is any imaginative activity. And when these jivas get entangled in imaginative ideas as pleasure and pain the life process is lengthened. But as we come to know of the existence of Rahu only by the eclipse, so also are we enabled to know the Atman only from these imaginative creations and our experiences. We cannot know the Atman by means of the sense organs. In the satwic state Atma is realised only by the Atma. It cannot be realised by mere enquiry and study of shastras or even through a Guru. Just like a crystal which reflects the colours of the objects near about it, so also are these sense-organs reflected in Consciousness as objects. Then our actions are no more than the conjunction of the organs with other objects. If we think on these lines, then mental equipoise will be attained. So we should treat our body too as a mere object and turn our gaze towards the Atma. Treating the body as "self" leads to bondage and treating it as not the "self" leads to Release. The "self" is Chith and is an idea only and the world phenomenon that appears in Atman can be not different from Atman. Both when the world perceptions arise and when they subside they are none other than Atman. So when ideas subside mind is quelled.

Those who are engaged in this Atma-yoga can be classified into seven different categories indicating various states of attainment.

1. They are said to have attained the first stage of yoga who have studied the shastras with discrimination, have association with the wise and are intelligent.
2. Those who are deeply engrossed in enquiry are said to have attained the second stage.
3. Those who have discarded the sense pleasures are said to have reached the third stage.
4. Those who have conquered the promptings of instinct or vasanās are said to have attained the fourth stage.
5. Those who shine forth as the embodiment of Knowledge and are perfectly balanced in outlook are said to have reached the fifth stage. Their eyes are half closed to the world.
6. Those who are wholly engrossed in the "self" are said to be in the sixth stage. Their eyes are fully closed to the world.
7. Those in whom all mental activity has ceased are said to have attained the seventh stage i. e. past the Turiya state.

The first three stages are known as the jagrat or waking state. The fourth is a kind of dream state. The fifth is a state of half sleep. The sixth stage is akin

to deep sleep. All these stages pertain to world perceptions. Those who are in the seventh stage are beyond description and comprehension.

Thus, oh Ikshvaku ! the path you have to pursue is to discard all desires totally, not to bestow even a thought about the past or the future and lastly to experience anything that happens to you without any sort of reaction. Do whatever you can and do not bother about what you cannot. If sleep overcomes you, you had better sleep right where you are. Be above all rules and regulations, codes of conduct, right and wrong and have a broad outlook. In any kind of activity undertaken for the moment, forsake the result and do not consider whether it is good or bad. Give no consideration to the praises or blame of the people. treat them all alike and finally discard even the thought of the 'self'.

Vasishta : Thus advised by Manu, Ikshvaku followed these precepts faithfully and lived thereafter many many years as a shining star among men.

Rama : What peculiarities are observable in jivan-Mukhtas ?

Vasishta : Jivan Mukhtas are ever in contemplation of the Atma and so are always in perfect contentment and composure. This is the peculiarity observable among them. With proper effort one can achieve attainments in Manthras, Thanthras or yoga. But Jivan-Mukhtas do not bestow a thought over such attainments.

This jiva, which is identical with Consciousness, by reason of its imaginative activity, descends to the state of life process. At first it has only a subtle body but then as it is constantly engaged in imaginative activity, it creates diverse objects in this activity and in order to derive enjoyment out of them takes on a gross body. So every jiva has these three gunas or qualities in itself viz : Satwa rajas and tamas i. e. Chuthi which is the satwic state, manas which is the subtle body and the physical or gross body. The combination of the subtle and the gross increases the tendency for activity and enjoyment. Activity is pursued only for the sake of enjoyment and this activity is therefore due to desires only, which multiply through imaginative activity. Imaginative activity is due to the sense of duality as knower and the act of knowing. Thus imaginative activity determines the jiva's life period and it's activity results in pleasure and pain. They will cease only if imaginative activity is suppressed. So wise people would give up imaginative activity. Out of the three aspects of jiva, the two, viz : the subtle and the gross bodies must be discarded and one must stand steadfast in the satwic state. Since every kind of activity is due to and is of the mind, one must seek to destroy the mind with the help of the mind, in the same manner as poison is countered by another poison or one asthma by another.

Rama : What are the special features of the Turiya state which is outside the three stated, waking, dream and sleep?

Vasishta : The Turiya state is that in which the "self" consciousness is given up and there is no perception because of the absence of a second. The Turiya state is just being a silent witness to phenomena.

Oh Rama! Be a perfect Mouni by giving up all. When mental activity subsides completely, that state is known as Nirvana. Whatever activity you may pursue, let the gaze of your mind be turned inwards to the Atman.

Rama : It is said that those who follow the path of yoga may be in anyone of seven different stages of attainment. What are these stages?

Vasishta : Mankind may be sub-divided in two classes of beings, viz : (1) those who are in the evolutionary state and (2) those who are in the involutionary state. The former are those who do not care for Nirvana. So, bent on enjoyment they get entangled in ever-recurring activity and like a tortoise, that pushes out its neck and withdraws it off and on, get caught in the cycle of births and deaths. In this manner, they will pass through many yugas. The other class, out of a disgust to this wheel of samsara, turn to the attainment of Nirvana. These people may be in any one of seven stages of attainment.

1. Those, who shun worldly pleasures and engage themselves in serious enquiry and discharge their duties without any attachment

to the results, are in the first stage of attainment.

2. Those, who associate with the wise, who reduce activity, speech and mind to a minimum, and pursue the path of knowledge, are said to be in the second stage.
3. Those, who have studied the shastras with discrimination and have grasped their essentials, are said to be pundits. By such studies one should understand the nature of substances, the purpose of activity and thereby get rid of passion, phlegmatism, stinginess etc. and betake themselves to the study of the shastras, association with the wise and a guru and lead a life of non-attachment. Such people are said to have attained the third stage. Their non-attachment may be one of two kinds i.e. either what is called the ordinary one or the other one of a laudable kind. The ordinary non-attachment is to have the attitude that we are neither doers nor enjoyers, neither affecting others nor being affected by them and that happiness, misery, activity all arise out of vasanas and that diseases of the mind or body are nothing but mental attitudes. The other kind is that by which one is of the firm conviction that all that takes place in this world is due to cosmic activity, in which many such universes lie latent and which appear and disappear. The expression "I" by which the self is designated

is neither here nor there, neither above nor below. It is neither subject nor object, neither subtle nor gross, but is beginningless, ever in repose and all-pervasive.

The first of these states of attainment happens unexpectedly as a result of efforts in previous lives or by association with the wise. When this state is reached, one must carefully treasure it and pursue it with proper effort. Then, ascertaining by what means this state was secured, one must foster the very means so that in course of time the other two states may be reached one after another.

Rama : If one is quite ignorant and he has no facilities of any kind for improvement, then, is there any salvation for him? Then again, if, when one has reached any one of the stages mentioned above, he suddenly dies what is his end?

Vasishta : However ignorant or wicked one may be, at some future time he will turn for the better by association with the wise or by his own previous karma and then develop non-attachment. Till he gets this non-attachment, there is no redemption of course. But when once he gets it, then further progress is a matter of time. This is the gist of the shastras.

Then with regard to the other question, the person will be reborn in a good family. The efforts and attainment of his previous life would lead him on

to the same path and quickly attaining the same state, he will make further progress.

The three states mentioned above may be likened to the waking state, since the sense of differentiation as subject-object still persists in these stages. Although the person in the third stage may be one commanding the respect and veneration of common people, he is still not competent to attain Release.

If after attaining the third stage one continues his efforts to get rid of ignorance, then wisdom dawns on him and, the sense of differentiation being got rid of, his mind becomes as clear, cool and composed as the full moon, and he reaches the fourth stage. Since such a person experiences the world as a dream, he is said to be in the dream state. Thereafter, even the perception of the world and its objects subsides and a state akin to sleep arises. The one in the next higher or sixth stage is without even the consciousness of the "self", so that all sense of activity ceases and he is in a pure satwic state or a state of pure existence. He is said to be a jivan Mukhta or beyond the turiya state. Then, when the mind phenomenon completely dies out and he is in a state of being "No-thing" in relation to the world, he is said to have attained disembodied existence. This is a state which can neither be described nor even comprehended. This state is variously known as Brahman, or Iswara, Prakriti or Purusha.

So, those who think of their self-advancement must boldly fight this wild elephant with two tusks that

roams about the battlefield of yoga and conquer him. Otherwise it is impossible to make any progress.

Rama : What is that battle-field referred to by you? Where is it? Which is this elephant? Please explain these to me.

Vasishta : Our body is the land of yoga; samsara is the field of battle. Desire is the elephant and manas is the forest in which the elephant roams about. Good and bad deeds are the tusks of the elephant.

If the diverse desires in us are not totally annihilated, then life would have been lived in vain. It is desire that is variously known as vasana or manas, chitha, imagination, idea or perception. A stout and courageous heart is the only weapon by which it can be vanquished. It is fairly easy to win in this battle. Desire is the cause of bondage, non-attachment is the path for salvation. Imagination is the cause of bondage, counter-imagination is the path for Release. Perceptions giving rise to reactions multiply samsara and absence of reactions tend to reduce the tendency to perception. So, not indulging in mental activity enables one to achieve Release. But people in general, instead of observing this golden rule, head towards the ocean of misery.

Bharadwaja : Were these all the discourses made to Rama with a view to confer benefit on all people generally or were there some more?

Valmiki : When Vasishta had stopped his discourses for the day, Rama was in deep

contemplation like one who enjoyed the taste of Amritham (Nectar).

Bharadwaja: Oh, lord among the rishis! Rama was a great soul and so he could attain this state quickly. But what path could be pursued by one like me, who is not so gifted?

Valmiki: I have told you all that Vasishtha told Rama. If you again and again reflect on these you will also obtain perfect peace of mind.

This world phenomenon is sustained by two sets of ideas viz: wisdom and ignorance. But in reality there is no such distinction in Chith. It is the sole Reality. So one should adopt the attitude of sleep in waking towards world phenomena. Since this universe arose out of "No-thing" its essence is also nothing. "So let me also adopt the attitude of negating ideas" should be the aspirant's motto.

This "self"-idea has taken deep root during millions of years. This samsara is like a city amidst clouds and so variegated. All that present the appearance of things have no substance in them. They are no better than dream objects. Owing to our ignorance and a sense of differentiation, we seem to see many an object, as we see bubbles in water. In the same manner that these bubbles vanish in a second, the sense of differentiation and all the attendant evils will vanish when wisdom dawns. One and the same Chith gives the appearance of many owing to the imaginative ideas of beings. It is this faculty that

accounts for the unending world phenomena. Wherefrom arose all these? By what are they sustained? Into what do they subside? If these questions are seriously enquired into, one would realise that they are mere appearances reflected in Consciousness or Brahman. Both the "self" and the world are Brahman.

This world of matter is composed of paramanus (atoms) and at all times it will be so. In these collections of atoms continual changes are going on. No substantial significance can be attached to them. So you should contemplate only on the Brahman which leads to the blissful state i.e. at first Saguna Brahman and in due course to Nirguna Brahman. If one is in this state even for an instant, then he is bound to reach that state permanently in due course.

Ordinarily, people waste their time in doing prescribed rites and routine observances. This way of life finds support in the puranas which enjoin injunctions of this nature. Oh, Bharadwaja! be wise and rid yourself of this delusion. Just as an insignificant person has for his goal only small attainments and a king aims at mighty achievements, so also may you follow the high and blessed path of gnana. Just as day and night follow each other, so also would you be caught in the cycle of birth and death, if you get caught in the stream of activity. So you had better free yourself from it.

Bharadwaja: I am greatly indebted to your discourses. The substance of these discourses is

that non-attachment is the path for Release. If Vasishtha had said anything else I would like to hear them too.

Valmiki: Let me tell you one thing. Finding yourself a comfortable seat, controlling your senses so that all thoughts external or internal are shut out, renounce the world and its contents muttering "OM" and so obtain mental peace. If in this state the body is thought to be identified with the five elements and the five kinds of perceptions with the five senses, then the mind will be transformed into Chith. If the gaze is turned outward, then creative activity is the result.

Bharadwaja: I am now in that state. I am in the enjoyment of bliss. But one point is not clear to me and I would request you to explain it to me i.e. what attitude jivan Mukhtas take towards activity and duties.

Valmiki: Jivan Mukhtas do not distinguish between good and bad actions and do whatever duty comes to them unsought, without attachment or aversion. Whatever may be done by them, they would not amount to actions since their mind is not in the act. Those who have "self-consciousness" and in consequence distinguish between "self" and objects, happiness and misery, are known as jivas. To them can be attributed the performance of actions bearing results. But those who have risen above such ideas are ever free from the taint of activities, whatever they may be.

Oh, Bharadwaja! I have told you the substance of all the shastras and whatever could be learned from a guru like Vasishtha. You should now put into practice the teachings you have heard, with a firm conviction. Uninterrupted practice alone will enable one to achieve all Siddhis.

Bharadwaja: If I should know how Rama lived his life, while in the performance of Mahayoga, I would also follow the same path.

Valmiki: I will tell you about it too. Seeing Rama's state viz: completely withdrawn from the world, Viswamitra said a few words to Vasishtha.

Viswamitra: Oh foremost among the rishis! Son of Brahma! If one can attain the state of Release by learning from a guru, then it can be achieved in a moment from your discourses. There is none to equal you in Intelligence, knowledge and method of imparting that knowledge. There is no one who cannot attain knowledge from your discourses. But the teachings of a guru can only stimulate the pupil's interest and point out the way but cannot impart wisdom to him, since right knowledge can be derived only from one's own experience and so wisdom can arise only from one's own efforts.

Rama obtained the knowledge of Atma very quickly because of his intelligence and non-attachment. But if he should continue in that state, then many good things required to be carried out for the good of the world will be left undone. My own work too will remain unaccomplished. I got

Dasaratha's permission to let Rama help me, with very great difficulty. That will also be rendered useless. Further, Rama is ordained to teach dharma to the three worlds. He has to perform some great deeds such as to get rid of the rakshasas who prevent the Munis from performing their yagnas, to release Ahalya from her curse, then to wield the mighty bow in the possession of Janaka, to get possession of it and then to win over the son of Jamadagni. Further, in fulfillment of his father's words, he has to renounce his title to the throne, go to live in a forest with his wife. Then when his wife is carried away by rakshasas, he would seek the aid of vanaras, to whom he would inculcate the proper relationship that should prevail between man and woman, then kill Ravana and redeem his wife and finally prove the chastity of his wife Seetha to the common folk to respect their sentiments. Then lastly, he should show the people how Jivan Mukhtas lead their lives, whatever the avocation, and carry on their duties without any sort of attachment.

Thus, in order that these deeds, which would benefit the human race, may be performed, it is necessary that Rama should be reclaimed to worldly life. If this is done, my undertaking could also be carried out.

Valmiki : The members of the assembly including the rishis, Siddhas and others were profoundly stirred at hearing that such a great and noble soul as Rama should be subject to so great hardships in life. Vasishtha then asked Viswamitra what sort of being was Rama, whether a human being or deva.

Viswamitra : Rama is an avatar of that being which protects all the three worlds. He is descended to establish dharma and law among men. Although freed from the wheel of samsara, still he would participate in it and bear the burden of kingship in order to give protection to the subjects, be a friend of the good, serve his parents and brothers, punish the wicked and show to the world how a jivan Mukhta should carry out the duties that befall him.

Valmiki : When Vasishtha heard these words about Rama, he was in silent adoration for a minute and then turning towards Rama said, Oh, Rama! thou who art Chith! May you enjoy this abiding state later on! For the present you should participate in worldly life and look after your kingdom. True gnanis will not shun their duties. May you also carry out the work assigned by the devas and be a peaceful soul!

Since Rama was not yet awake to the world, Vasishtha aroused Rama by exciting his Chith by his own through the Sushumna nadi. Thereupon Rama slowly gained world-consciousness and opened his eyes. Immediately he turned towards Vasishtha, made his obeisances and extolled his greatness. Then the whole assembly began to stir up, made its obeisance and extolled his virtues.

Oh, then Bharadwaja! Whoever hears these discourses of Vasishtha to Rama daily and engages himself in serious enquiry will without doubt reach the state of Brahman.

NIRVANA PRAKARNA

PART 2—SECTION 1.

Rama :

How can one continue to live, when he has given up all activity of body and mind ?

Surrendering imaginative activity :

Vasishta : Imaginative activity can be given up only in the living state and not when dead. Let me explain it in detail. Imaginative activity centres round the "I" thought. When this "I" thought is given up, we say imaginative activity is given up. When a desire arises in respect of an object or an idea, then it indicates imaginative activity. If the desire is given up then it amounts to a surrender of imaginative activity in respect of it. To say that this is a thing" indicates imaginative activity. Not to be aware of it amounts to giving up imaginative activity. Thought is to be considered as imaginative activity. Not to think of either what was experienced or not experienced amounts to giving up imaginative activity. No mental activity can arise without the basis of the "I" thought, as all thoughts are based on the subject-object relationship in which the "I" sense is the subject.

A person is said to do things unattached, when he just indulges in such activity as comes his way unsought, like a child which kicks about when half

asleep, without any vestige of an idea in its mind. Like a wheel that had been set in motion at a high speed continuing in its motion by virtue of its previous momentum and coming to rest gradually, so also should activity be pursued only to that extent which arises out of "vasanas" enabling it to die out gradually by giving up all desires about such activity.

There is no higher life-state than that, in which imaginative activity is voluntarily given up. People, in general, court always misery not realising this fact. Not even the kingship of all the worlds can compare with that state in which all imaginative activity and the desire to perceive is given up. There is a commendable way of carrying out the duties befalling one. A person proceeding towards a particular destination, as soon as he comes near it, no longer worries about his path but most unconcernedly jogs on wherever his legs lead him and yet he reaches his destination. In like manner, should a man carry out his duties without any thought of the pleasure or pain that may arise out of them, but as mere physical activity; there should be no mental reaction arising out of them. In the summer season the sun's rays draw out all the moisture from plants and trees; then they stand out with bare branches bereft of all leaves. In like manner, should the rays from the Chith-Surya withdraw all sense of desire or aversion in all activities so that activity is pursued in a mechanical manner. It is one's imaginative activity that enslaves the mind and so if it be given up, mind

to realise activity in activity and thus activity is the pain enjoyed here.

The thoughts centre round the 'I' thought. The 'I' thought can arise without it as basis. Hence, the 'I' thought is given up, all other thoughts and the life.

When imaginative activity and the sense of 'I' are given up, then the world and its contents will not appear as useless matter. The various expressions in space, time, manas, buddhi and so forth in you is the only truth the Atma. Really this is the Atma that pervades called Time, Space, Activity, Word, etc. and so forth according to circumstances and is not reduced as such. And so be free of mind, let mind with the steadfastness of the core of your

What is meant by Karma ?

Rama: In the state of achievement mentioned above, what are the activities that are considered good and may be pursued and what sort of activities should be given up ?

Vasishta: Let me put some counter-questions. What do we call Karma or activity ? How do they arise and what is their basis ? How would you give them up ?

Rama: Good and bad are one's own personal ideas. If the root of reaching tendency is removed, then all activity subsides. Activity may be likened to a tree and it resides in the body. Senses

or worldly activity are its branches. Pleasure and pain are the fruits thereof, in search of which it takes many successive births. It then roams about in the dark jungle called world and gets entangled in the net of attachment and fear. Hands and feet are the leaves of this strange tree. The five sense organs may be likened to the knots. The blood stream and vasanas attached to the knots. The mind phenomenon which is the sap on account of which it grows. The root of the vasanas is the mind phenomenon which spreads over the three worlds. Mind phenomenon arises out of activity which is caused by the error which runs springs from Brahman. So activity is the main-head of all our troubles and if this be given up, then the physical body is shed away. If the sense of differentiation of knower and known object is given up, then activity subsides leading to full freedom.

Perceptions will not subside in embodied existence

Vasishta: Rama, All activities are subtle in origin and are of the nature of percepts and so how is it possible to repress them ? These percepts whether they be considered real or unreal cannot be destroyed. But what can be destroyed is vasanas, desires and manas, which are built around percepts. Whether one is ignorant or wise he cannot get rid of percepts. The existence of the physical body is associated with perceptions.

The very characteristic of Nature is perception. So what we do is to indulge in imaginative activity and store up various desires on the basis of these

percepts. These alone can be discarded by us. So long as such reactions to perceptions exist, we call it a state of bondage and when reactions cease, we call it a state of freedom or Moksha.

Rama : What is real cannot but be cognised and what is not real cannot be cognised. How does cognition or non-cognition arise here?

Vasishta : Too true! I shall explain it briefly. So long as the physical body exists, one cannot but be alive to cognitive acts, which are its very nature. Both the ignorant and the wise are in the state of embodied existence. The difference between them arises in that the ignorant man treats the body as real and permanent and builds up a mass of reacting tendencies around perceptions, thereby lengthening the life cycle endlessly. But the wise man considers that the body and percepts are ephemeral and so frees himself from reacting tendencies and cuts short the life cycles. His body however lasts till all prior activities have borne fruit. But in this state the wise man, while enduring the fruits of past actions, is at the same time free from all reacting tendency. After death there is no further life-state for him.

So what constitutes ignorance is considering this physical body to be real. So long as this ignorance lasts, neither the body nor cognition can be given up. When this ignorance is effaced then both body and perceptions cease.

The "I" Thought.

All perceptions arise on the basis of the thought of the "self". It is not a reality, it is a pure imaginative idea. It is on the basis of this idea all other ideas such as objects, the world, time, space and so forth arise. If the "I" thought does not arise, then the other ideas too do not arise. So, if perceptions have to cease, then the thought of "self" should cease. But this thought of "self" arose in the very beginning of creation and would last as long as life lasts. We cannot find a cause for it; it arose spontaneously. It is realised as a reflection in pure Consciousness. Both the reflecting Consciousness and the reflected ego-consciousness are of the nature of nothingness. It would therefore be wrong to consider them as different from each other. Such differentiation is the source of our troubles. It is our ignorance that clouds the reflecting light of Consciousness and makes us see the "self" as distinct from Consciousness. When this cloud of ignorance is dispelled we see the identity of the two.

What takes its rise from Brahman cannot be different from it. Just like the identity of waves and water, motion and air, gold and bangles, so also can Brahman and Self not be separated from each other. All the same they appear to us as different. This all-embracing unity cannot be brought within the range of speech or thought.

As the "I" thought is due to ignorance, it would cease only by ceaseless enquiry leading to the attainment of wisdom. What arises out of imaginative activity could be eradicated only by countering it.

i. e. by negating imagination. What is the difficulty in ceasing to indulge in imaginative activity? It is certainly much easier than to exercise the imagination. Is it not much better to attain the highest state by giving up all imaginative activity than to court endless troubles by pursuing imaginative activity. Those that cannot carry out such a simple thing are not men; they are no better than animal creations.

What is known as self-surrender is that state in which the "self" idea and all imaginative activity is given up and one remains in a perfectly calm and detached frame of mind. Leading an idle life, giving up all duties and activities, would not amount to surrender. Surrender must arise out of knowledge and wisdom.

Control of the Senses

Vasishta : Whoever, having a proper estimate of himself, exercises control over his senses and pursues worldly activity, will achieve all that he undertakes. Those that are incapable of it cannot certainly reach a high status. I am reminded now of an incident in the past, which I shall relate to you.

I was curious to know whether there could be men who continue in their ignorance ever and always, however many births they may take, and having no chance of a redemption. As there was no fitter person than Bhusunda who could throw light on this point, I went to his abode in Meru mountain

and mentioned my doubt to him. He then narrated to me the incidents in the life of a Vidyadhara who had come to him seeking enlightenment.

The Story of the Vidyadhara

Bhusunda : This Vidyadhara, although he had lived through four yuga-cycles and done his appointed duties without a blemish and had led a worthy life in general, had not learned Atma-Vidya and so came to me in a very despondent mood seeking solace. I received him suitably and enquired of him the object of his visit. He then narrated his life history.

Vidyadhara : I belong to a class of Devas, known as Vidyadharas, and I was living in a territory bordering on the ends of the earth. I have lived through four yuga-cycles. I led a highly devoted and religious life discharging my duties faithfully, so as to be respected by all. There was no high status in life that I had not attained, no enjoyment not experienced by me. Every sense organ had its fullest measure of enjoyment. I have tasted the womanly pleasures from thousands of women. There is no sort of enjoyment still to be tasted by me. In spite of all this, my mind knows no contentment. It would seem that it is in the very nature of worldly pleasures, not to yield any contentment, but to entice one to follow one after another endlessly. There is no nett gain out of all these rounds of enjoyment. The same pleasures are being indulged in repeatedly in a stupid manner.

It seems therefore to be the height of folly to pursue the sense pleasures which at no time yield any abiding contentment. I now feel as if I had wasted a long period of four yuga cycles. My own sense organs turned out to be my enemies. I have grown a little wiser now. I have discarded entirely all such pleasures, as I feel that there can be no redemption without doing so. I have come to you seeking guidance on the road to enlightenment. I consider you as my father and spiritual guru.

Bhusunda : Thou best of the Vidhyadharas! As you were steeped in ignorance for a long long time, you were unable to free yourself from the shackles of samsara. You have now grown wise as a result of your past good deeds. In this present state of mind, you will be open to receive good advice. You will accordingly give your wholehearted attention to what I shall presently say and treasure them. Give up the idea of making further enquiries, as you are not competent for it and follow the advice which I shall give.

"I" Concept False :

You must first realise that the concept of "self" and "world" are false appearances. There really are no such things or ideas. Reality is one and it is That that is variously experienced as "I" and the "world". Such percepts are false, like the mirage. The one and only Reality is experienced variously as mountain, sea, river, you, I and so forth and all these are no more than mere percepts. With this

conviction firmly implanted, may you free yourself from bondage !

The concept of "self" is what is at the root of world phenomena and all our troubles. This seed of ignorance can be burnt up by the rays of wisdom. "Self-consciousness" is the cause of samsara and not to be "self-conscious" is known as wisdom. When it did not exist even at the beginning of creation, there is no justification to cling to it now. So, the talk of duality and then of their fusing together into unity arise out of our deluded notions. And so, armed with these precepts and taking a resolution to give up all imaginative activity, may you achieve your heart's desire! Nothing however can be achieved without your personal efforts and discrimination.

What we experience as world phenomena are all truly variants of Chith and they are not real. So, we cannot find a cause for their appearance and dissolution within ourselves or outside. This world phenomena is not different from the model imagined by the sculptor which is subsequently transformed into a work of art. When imaginative activity prevails, we experience the world phenomena and when that ceases, we witness its dissolution. In like manner, this delusion of samsara is experienced when imagination is at play and it disappears by countering imaginative activity.

Activity and Repose

What was stated as variants of Chith are our perceptions or activity of Chith. What really is

eternally in repose, pure and unchanging is perceived by us as activity out of our own ignorance. Activity can be perceived only against a background of Repose just as waves arise only in a calm sea. The fire bursts into flame only in the presence of wind and when it ceases to fan the embers die out. As long as ignorance prevails the active aspect of Chith alone is perceived by us and when wisdom dawns Chith is experienced to be in repose.

Just as heat is latent in water, so also activity, which is inseparable from Repose, is latent in the latter. We can perceive activity only against a background of inactivity or inertia. In like manner, perception and non-perception also give differing and contradictory pictures, although both of them are mere mental states and are as subtle as akasa. The foam on the water surface lay latent before it appeared, so also is activity latent in Brahman.

The World Phenomena is Brahman

The foam on the water cannot arise without a cause. In like manner, the world phenomena must also have had a cause. But enquire how we may, such a cause is not traceable to Brahman. On the other hand, there cannot be an effect without a cause. Hence we must conclude that the world phenomenon never appeared. But we are actually experiencing it, which cannot be denied. Yes, that is because of our deluded senses ; we experience only our own

imaginative ideas. There is really no water in the desert, although we see its appearance. We can also view the matter differently. If the world phenomena is considered to have been really created, then its destruction also is inevitable. In this state of dissolution what is left behind ? What is the subject for enquiry then ?

All methods of enquiry lead us to the only conclusion that all is Brahman. It is impossible to establish that the world was ever created or that it is different from Brahman. Perception of difference between them is the cause of the load of samsara that we bear. The world phenomenon can arise only in Brahman and in none else. Only in this manner did the mountains, trees and plants appear as phenomena. One may enquire whether it is the nature of Brahman to produce such illusory phenomena. To speak of the "nature" or characteristic of a thing, we have to conceive of duality which is contradictory to the oneness of Brahman.

How should our minds function ?

To realise Brahman what should be our mental attitude ? It is that frame of mind which maintains an unvarying and unperturbable calmness, whether under great pain, as when the body is riddled with arrows or under intense pleasure derived from the embraces of the most lovely damsel. One must assiduously cultivate and practice to maintain this frame of mind. That is to say, we must cultivate a reactionless state of mind to objects and objective phenomena

so as to be as unmoved as during sleep. In such a state of mind, everything will be perceived as Brahman.

Poisonous germs grow out of poison in our bodies. In the germ state they are not free from poison. In like manner, the jiva taking root in Brahman cannot but be pervaded by Brahman. How then can these jivas be contaminated by the states known as birth and death. Hence the jiva and the world phenomena which simultaneously grow with it are both permeated by Brahman and can therefore under no circumstances be considered as distinct from Brahman.

Akasa stands for nothing-ness and we realise it in a sort of way, though properly unrealisable. In like manner, this "self" is an idea imagined in Brahman and we perceive this "self" in a sort of way though it is unperceivable. Just as akasa stands for nothing-ness, so does Chith stand for "self". Thus all appearances are mere variants of Chith. The ideas such as "I" and "you" can only arise in Chith. Just as the mighty Meru mountain is made up of atoms, so also this mighty universe is only an expression of Chith. Just as the placid waters of a lake, by a mere disturbance on its surface, give rise to waves, foam, current, whirls and so forth, so also does the Chith in its active aspect give rise to this world phenomena. In the state of repose, the same Chith is realised as perfect calmness, purity and as no-thingness. Ideas of time, place and activity are incompatible with this state. Although they appear to us as our perceptions

when we are alive to them, still they vanish into nothingness when we turn aside from them.

How to destroy mental reactions?

These reactions can be overcome only by persistent effort. Half our ignorance would disappear by associating with the wise and engaging ourselves in serious and searching enquiries. The association with the wise should be fostered very carefully. Then by the study of the Shastras another quarter of our ignorance will be overcome. Then the remaining portion of our ignorance would disappear if we make proper efforts. This effort consists in rooting out desires one after another and making the mind proof against them. Then in the course of such practice wisdom will dawn suddenly either as a result of these practices or unexpectedly, according to every one's previous life history.

The mightiness of the atomic idea and the atomicity of the idea of the Universe:

This concept of the expanding Universe does not need for its basis or support the concepts of time and Space. This visible universe is no more than a mental concept. By the mere exercise of our imaginative faculties, we can establish the three worlds. There is enough room for many universes in each particle of the Chith; so mighty is the magnitude of the particle of Chith or in other words, so insignificant are these mighty universes. However mighty the universe, it

has to be realised only by the mind which is *finer* than the minutest atom. So, the universe is *after all* only such an atomic concept, so impalpable, so light compared to the unimaginable extent to which the mind can expand. How many millions and millions of such universes can be accommodated within the compass of the Chith is easy enough to imagine.

The relation between "Self" and "World phenomena"

These two ideas always rise and set together and so are comparable to the inseparable relationship which subsists between water and fluidity, fire and heat, air and motion. We have to equate "self" with world phenomena and vice versa and they stand in the relationship of cause and effect between themselves. But just as water can wipe off the picture drawn on the floor, so also can this cloudiness of mind, that is, ideas such as "self" and "world," be dispelled by knowledge. For, in reality, they are non-existent and just as the emptiness of akasa gives the appearance of bluish colour, so also does Brahman give the appearance of world phenomena. These false appearances in the two cases arise out of defective vision in the one case and out of ignorance in the other respectively. No one has at any time been able to ascertain the cause for the rise of this phenomenal world. So, to say that it is real would be as foolish as to say that hares have horns or that a spinster gave birth to children. So, thou high-souled Vidyadhara! follow this lofty path and may thou thus live long!

The Vidyadhara hearing these words of mine went into Samadhi. As his mind had been cleansed of all impurities and as he had given up all attachments, he absorbed all my teachings immediately. Just as a drop of oil thrown on water spreads itself over the whole surface, so also did these words of wisdom permeate his mind. And so he was able to attain the highest state very quickly and he continues in that state even now.

Vasishta : Having heard this incident, I took leave of the Muni and returned to my abode among the rishis.

What we denote by the expression "jiva" is no more than an idea that arose in Brahman. It is known as "prana" so long as it is associated with a physical body. This same prana manifests itself as mind and mind manifests itself as world phenomena. So the three pronged phenomena 'Prana - mind - world' is known as Jiva. But as we stated above the Jiva is only an idea and so every Jiva in this world is no more than an idea in the universal Consciousness or Brahman.

This Jiva is both microcosmic and macro-cosmic and witnesses the same world inside and outside the body. Or, to put it in other words, the world phenomena is perceived within oneself and so wherever it wanders these ideas accompany it. And now look around ! See how many Jivas pervade this space and fly about hither and thither. Just as

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the hillock near a flowing water-course appears to run, so also do these mountains, forests and so forth appear to fly about in the sky for, what reside, in the mind should go with the mind wherever it wanders. But in truth, nothing at no time goes anywhere, everything remains as it is. But, since the mind always wanders about and carries all its ideas with it, it is quite appropriate also to say that objects of the world residing as ideas within it also fly about.

In the state known as death, when the Jiva leaves the present body for a fresh one, it carries with it all the ideas of the world known as mind. So it starts its new lease of life with all the ideas it has come laden with. But all these past life experiences are not discernable in the walking state; they will be experienced only as dream phenomena. As those ideas remain latent, they influence the new cycle of life. So it would be stupid to consider death as final dissolution. We must, on the other hand, consider each life cycle as an effort to realise a particular group of desires. When these are realised and, if in the course of realisation, new desires have taken hold of the mind, a fresh cycle is started in a new body with the new groups of desires.

That these phenomenal appearances are experienced by us as real, is due to the fact that Chith is Reality and the Jiva also partakes of Chith in nature. One who sails in a ship in mid-ocean is unable to see the movement of the ship and when

he comes out of it, he is able to perceive the movement. In like manner, we would realise the true nature of our experiences only when we step out and observe. The experiences and the ideas of each Jiva are real only to it. Just as the dreams of one person are not experienced by others, so is it also with the experiences of each Jiva.

Rama : Oh! Venerable Guru! What form has this Jiva? Where does it reside? How does it finally merge in the Supreme Being? Kindly enlighten me on these points.

The Jiva and the Cosmic Being

Vasishtha : The Jiva is nothing but Chith in a dynamic state i. e. in the state of imagining. It is an all-pervading entity in a state of intense activity. It is neither atomic, nor gross, nor nothingness, nor in fact any "THING" at all. It is pure experience. All are Jivas in fact. In whatever form something is imagined to be, that thing is perceived and experienced as such. Just as motion is the fundamental characteristic of air, so also is imagination the fundamental characteristic of the Jiva. So long as imagination is being exercised, the Jiva is said to be in a state of existence and when imagination ceases, the Jiva is said to be dissolved. The root imaginative idea is "self" and with this as basis it creates the ideas of time, space, activity and matter and attains the state of bodily existence. After it reaches the embodied existence, it experiences itself as varying entities after successive deaths, in

the same manner as we experience ourselves as other than selves in dreams.

Just as the moon's rays are not different from the moon, so also are the perceptions of the Jiva not different from the Jiva. These perceptions are five fold, which arose all spontaneously in the beginning and with the aid of these perceptions the Jiva obtains enjoyment. The entity with these Jiva sensations or perceptions is known as the Cosmic Being. In this state, only these fivefold perceptive faculties are operative and no other extraneous ideas are associated with them. It is this Being that is known as "Isvara". Since the Jiva has the faculty of imagining and so can expand or contract as it likes, it thereby becomes seized with varying desires, after which it strives, attains them and subsides. This Jiva, being a mental being, can manifest itself only in a body. This manifested being, comprising the eightfold principles viz: the "I"-thought, prana, manas and five-fold sensations, is known as "Puri-ashtagam". It is this being which, with the aid of the imaginative faculty and organs of the body, brought into existence the Vedas, Shastras, the laws of Nature and so forth and determined for itself an abiding existence. It is the Jiva that brought out this material world into existence and it is the same Jiva that pervades it. This Jiva, which is an imaginative being in essence, transformed itself into the five gross principles by previously imagining them. All that is observed in Nature is no more than the imaginative creations of

the Jiva. It is the source of all created things. As the effect cannot be different from the cause, it is itself the effect. Oh, Rama! be thou a Gnani and not a pseudo-Gnani.

Rama : What does it mean? How should one be a Gnani? And then what is the ultimate object of being a Gnani?

Gnani and Pseudo-Gnani

Vasishta : The pseudo-Gnani is one who is learned in all the Vedas and Shastras and has the ability to propound them very clearly. He is one who believes that precept is better than practice and is a great talker. He is an artist in language and is content with teaching others although he may have no idea of following his own precepts. He is endowed with all knowledge other than that about Atma.

On the other hand, Gnani is one who practises what he preaches. He might participate in all sorts of worldly activities but yet not be attached to them. With the mind ever tranquil and at peace with all beings he looks on everything in the world, be they objects or ideas, with unruffled calmness.

Amidst a flood of activity, if one keeps his mind free from any taint and absolutely unruffled, he is known as a Gnani and a truly learned man. He realises that ignorance and imaginative activity cannot be traced to any cause, although they are continuously in evidence and therefore stands steadfast in wisdom. The

wise man realises that the Jiva originates in Brahman and his activity is accordingly based on this Knowledge. Activity is Jiva. The mango fruit is the essence of the leaves and similarly does the Jiva spring from Brahman. The wise man turns away from the "object-cognition-mental-reaction" phenomenon and stands beyond activity and non-activity is immersed in the contemplation of Brahman. When the trunk of the plantain tree is peeled off layer by layer one meets with only the bark; so also does activity ever produce only fresh activity. Desire for activity is what is known as ignorance. If desires be given up wisdom dawns. Indulgence in sense objects gives rise to bondage; freedom from such indulgence leads to Realisation. In water, one can find only water; so also can one find only unity in duality. Objects of the world arise in our knowledge and this is the very nature of the Atman.

This external world is perceived within the "self" and the "self" is perceived in the external world. Each sustains the other and together they grow in layers just like the bark of the plantain tree. Just as we see bangles in gold and the reflection of the hill in water, so also does the jiva perceive creative activity in the Atman but without any cause. But this is not proper perception. The wise man is always in contemplation of the Atman whatever activity he may be pursuing, just like the shepherd, whose mind is absorbed by the pot which he had kept somewhere behind, whatever activity he may be engaged in.

The nature of the Jiva

Just as the moon's rays pervade everything, so also does this Cosmic Being pervade all Jivas. This Jiva itself is subtler than the subtlest, grosser than the grossest and assumes every form manifested in the universe. This "I"-thought, imagining itself as the pervasive Being and, having created for itself the phenomenon of time, manifests itself in all the three periods, past, present and future. Taking on the appearance of Reality; it indulges in activity. Taking the body as the Reality and imbued with a desire for fruits of actions it indulges in creative activity and thereby establishes this phenomenal universe and like a cloud it pervades that universe. It makes use of the body as an abode for all manner of sensations and perceptions and thereby loads itself with vasanas. Although the Jiva is a being of the nature of imagination it gives the appearance of being gross when in activity.

The wise, having understood the real nature of the Jiva, give up all imaginative activity and in a calm spirit carry on the duties that befall them.

Mangi's Salvation

Vasishta : To attain salvation, one might follow the path shown by the rishi Mangi who gave up all desires and freed himself from the thralldom of the vasanas.

Once upon a time there lived a brahmin in some part of the world. He had scrutinised all the shastras

and performed all sorts of rites and rituals prescribed in them. One day when I went to meet one of your ancestors, who had expressed a desire to see me, and was coming down to the earthly region from the skies, I happened to come across a desert region. There I met this brahmin coming towards me. Having observed him keenly, his appearance, his facial expression and his surroundings, I guessed his mental state and put him some questions.

Oh! brahmin! This spot is habitable only by the lowest of men, who have no thought of bettering themselves. Anyone who cares to improve the lot of either his body or mind, will not choose to live in such a place. You appear to be a well-read brahmin, however, beset with doubts. What brought you to such a place as this?

Brahmin: I am blessed by having seen you. I know not whom I have the honour to speak to, nor your name. I cannot even guess whether you are a Deva or a human being. You appear to be all-knowing, perfectly contented and serene. Your mind must be all embracing and yet mindless. I can attribute this happy circumstance of my being able to speak to you only to my former good deeds. I have only one request to make to you, viz: to show me the path to cross this samsara.

Vasishta: I am a Raja-rishi and I am known by the name of Vasishta. I live in the regions of the sky. I came down to earth in connection with a mortal being's business. I happened to meet you here on my

way to my destination. Who are you? Where are you going? You appear to be a learned man who has given up all desires and so you are fit to be initiated in the path of knowledge. What path would you like to choose in crossing this ocean of samsara?

Brahmin: Venerable sage! I have wandered all over for several years in quest of a wise person who could teach me the path of Knowledge. Not having found the person, I am on my way back to my home. I have got disgusted with these recurring births and doing the same things again and again. With certain conviction that pain invariably follows pleasure, I courted pain and got used to that too. In the impenetrable darkness arising out of the imaginative faculty, I can discern no light to lead me on to the right path; so I request you to lift me out of this deplorable state. You are the fittest person for it.

Vasanas & Samsara.

Vasishta: Perception, imagination and vasanas are alone the cause of all misery to mankind. Just as the trees and plants sprout up on the onset of spring season, in like manner, when perceptions arise, or when imagination is at play, troubles begin to beset the mind. This dense forest known by the name of samsara grew out of vasanas or desires of prior lives. When the spring season is at an end, the trees and plants shed their leaves and wither away for lack of nourishment and in like manner, in the case of the wise ones, by virtue of their having freed themselves

from Vasanas, all taste for worldly things dries up. With the accumulation of vasanas, samsara grows just as the sap of the tree ripens into fruits.

Everything ends in Knowledge.

What appears to be true as a result of false Knowledge, no longer appears to be so when wisdom dawns. What is really false Knowledge appears however to be true, in like manner to the appearance of a ghost to the ignorant. The object of cognition or perception and cogniser arise out of the act of cognition and cannot therefore be different from it. Pot is made of clay and there can be no pot without clay. Activity arises from the "Actor" (or Chith) and if there is no Actor there can be no activity. The objects of Knowledge cannot be different from Knowledge itself, since without it, nothing can be known. Knowledge knows successively the knower, the act of knowing and the object of knowledge. None of these can be known without Knowledge. And so, all these three cannot be different from Knowledge. And unless they are all of the same category, they would not fuse into one state.

The world phenomena experienced by us is nothing but a state of Knowledge, akin to air being experienced as a state of motion and sea as water. Even though lac may appear to be some distinct substance, it is nothing but the sap of a tree. So, although we may experience many phenomena, they are still false.

To think "I am in this body" leads to bondage; "I am not this" leads to Release. This "I"-thought may be construed in two different ways, either as a false phenomenon or as verily the Atman. If an article is dropped into a pot, it disappears from view. And the space inside is a part of the space outside. The "I"-thought however does not come under either of these classifications but is verily Atman, not being either a part of it or one that is hidden in it.

In this samsara, which is like an impenetrable forest, crores and crores of people keep appearing and disappearing. Every one of them leads a life for a time based on his own ideas and concepts. These ideas of theirs develop into vasanas which subsequently guide their conduct and action. And just as a shark ever lies in wait for flesh, so do these people ever keep expecting joys and sorrows of life. And this leads them on to ever-recurring births and deaths.

But if one stops to think and makes enquiry, this samsara will come to an end. If one only realises that it is pure Knowledge (Samvith) that appears as the world phenomena, then this samsara comes to a termination. The akasa is not different from sunyam (nothingness), air is not different from its motion, so also is this world phenomenon not different from Samvith.

When the brahmin Mangi, who was already ripe in Knowledge by casting off all desires and eager to escape from thralldom, heard these wise words, he absorbed them immediately and went into Samadhi.

He continued in that state for a hundred years and then entered the state of Nirvana.

So then Rama ! know that there is the only Reality known as Chith. This body is no more than an appearance in relation to it and it is constantly subject to birth and destruction. This world phenomenon appears and disappears like the waves on the surface of the water. Although the cloud, for instance, may appear white and fleecy like cotton, it cannot be worn in place of cloth. So also there is no use in imagining our "Self" as being part of this physical body. The object of contemplation, the act of contemplation and the one that contemplates, all these three, point to one Chith in three different forms. This Chith or Atman is however in eternal repose.

Rama : May I request you to explain to me the phenomena of (1) the seed being the cause of the plant ; (2) karmas being the cause for life phenomena and (3) What are known as acts of God ?

Vasishta : Karma and act of God mean the same thing. The original stir or movement in the Ocean of Consciousness is the cause of all world phenomena. It is also the cause of karma and life phenomena. Activity and the consequent tendency for repetition sustain world phenomena. If these cease, the world phenomena also disappears. In the activity that takes place in Consciousness, there is no perception of difference. It is our imagination that has conceived of various phenomena, such as Creator, act of creation, life phenomena, karma and so forth. Waves, water

lake, all indicate only water. In like manner, the activity of Chith is called by varying names. It is the mist that is sensed as chill and it is due to the chill that mist is formed. So also, it is the Jiva that indulges in karma and it is these karmas that make up the Jiva. So, in all these cases, we see that it is the one thing that goes by varying names in varying forms. It is therefore wrong to associate them with cause-effect process, as the substratum is unvarying, which is the Chith. It is the source and end of everything.

So then, Rama ! What you must do is to keep a calm and unruffled mind at all times and carry on the activities that befall you unsolicited. Let not such activities be spurned by you. On the other hand, carry them out boldly and properly. At the same time, do not go in quest of activities. Bear the resulting joys and sorrows of life with equanimity. Be a good man in the company of the good, be stern with the wicked, merciful to the poor and oppressed. If you are compelled to engage yourself in battle, kill your opponents like a machine but with an untinged mind. Be awake in sleep and a sleep in waking, so that both states are reduced to a common basis. If this is constantly practised properly, then the sense of duality will disappear and you will attain peace.

Rama : If everything is Truth and if besides there is recognition of the "Self", then how to explain the fact of your being here bearing the name Vasishta.

Valmiki : When Rama put this question, Vasishta remained silent for a few moments. The audience

were surprised at this silence of the Maharishi. Then Rama questioned again whether there was no answer to it. Then spoke Vasishtha thus :

Vasishtha : I was not without a proper answer to your question. This reply has to be made in two ways, viz: in one way to the ignorant but in quite a different way to the wise like you. Then you must bear also in mind the limitations of language, which is unfit to explain the nature of the Reality. The purpose of language is to differentiate object from object; it, in fact, stresses the differences. To explain the nature of the Reality to the lay and the ignorant, we have to establish many Siddhantas by making use of language. But the nature of the reply to the wise people like you must be such as to demonstrate the Truth. And that was what I did a few moments ago, I indicated the nature of the Reality in a very beautiful manner to you i. e. by my perfect silence (of body & mind). Absolute repose of body and mind is what explains the nature of Reality. Language, which bears the stamp of imperfection, fails to explain Reality and so I was absorbed for a while in my own "self". It is a state beyond the reach of imagination even.

Rama : With all the imperfections inherent in words and language, how would that state be spoken of?

Vasishtha : It is a state beyond all activity, beyond mental functioning. I was my own "Self", what is named "Chidakasa". The whole universe is reduced

to "akasa" and so was I. It is the state of pure knowledge. The Jiva is in perfect repose in that state, like one dead. One is beyond both happiness and misery in that state. The distinction of "Thou" and "I" disappears in that state.

If, from this state, the Jiva gravitates towards activity, it gets entangled in samsara and if from the state of activity it turns towards Repose, it attains liberation. When there is no perception of time-space phenomena and when the Jiva is established in its own self, how can there be any sense of activity. Just as the dreams we have are our own experiences, so also are our ideas and imaginings no more than subtle activities in the ocean of Knowledge. And so they must be of the nature of Knowledge itself. What we call mind, buddhi etc. all take their rise from it and cannot therefore be different from it. We may call them as the gross aspect of the Reality.

The Jiva is a flame that shoots up in Reality and grows when fanned by the wind of ignorance and is put out by Wisdom. One that follows the path of wisdom and incessantly practises it becomes a Muni but if on the other hand one follows the path of ignorance, he is degraded to the state of animals. To say that "I am Brahman, the world is also Brahman" is pure delusion, for there cannot arise such imaginings in Brahman. In the unchanging Brahman how can we conceive of perception. Just as we slip from the dream state into sleep, so also at the dawn of wisdom, all reactions cease and there is left only unruffled peace. The bluishness of the sky is the sky itself, so

also what appears as world phenomenon is verily Brahman. Appearances arise out of ignorance. In truth there is nothing like good or bad, happiness or misery, enjoyer or enjoyed. All are verily sunyam, mounam in ordinary discourse. Although we compare it to the state of sunyam, it is really not sunyam. It is just as good as that. Really, it is beyond both speech and mind.

" Self "

If one pursues the enquiry into the nature of the " Self " and engages himself in destroying it, then it leads to Liberation. This state cannot be compared to any other state. Not even the summer cloud is as fine and delicate as the state of Nirvana. Not even in the heart of the moon would one feel so pleasant. The strife and stress of the world would affect the mind of the wise man to no greater extent than what the raging battle seen in a painting would affect us. All that they perceive, if they can be called perceptions, are perceived as Brahman. The smoke from a fire may take on various strange shapes, but all the same they are smoke and not the forms which the smoke takes. Surely evanescent appearances that are reflected in Consciousness vanish when enquiry is made into their nature. This applies also to all experiences of joys and sorrows. Just as the branches, leaves, flowers and fruits are sensed in the state of the seed, so also are the " Ego " sense and the world phenomenon which arise with it are sensed by the Atman. What we call the object, perception, imagination, are also like

mere sparks arising in Brahmic Consciousness. Although they have the marks of Reality, they are not so in truth. When imaginative activity is discarded and when one frees himself from the thralldom of vasanas and sheds the " Ego " sense, then that state is not " life-state " but it is a state of Release.

Chith is an all-pervading principle and all appearances as world phenomena arise out of it and so whatever Chith perceives cannot be other than Chith. And so the experience as objects is not a truthful experience. What really happens is that certain ideas are imagined and when these ideas recur again and again, they are externalised and then they acquire the states of perceptions. With further repeated experiences, these perceptions condense to the state of objects. This is how the external world of objects had arisen ; that is, the imaginative ideas arising from Chith are the true external objects. This is how the act of creation took place. It is the Chith that is omniscient and what it perceives cannot be other than itself. And so, what is perceived is mere perception. Thus creation, dissolution, no-thingness, fullness are all mere empty words differing from one another only as words but not in what they signify.

All talk about dissolution of "self" and "the world" is all absurd, because they never existed. To discuss about their dissolution is like discussing about a forgotten dream. What appears when imaginative faculty is active disappears when it is inactive. What sense is there in talking about its disappearance. What did

not exist flashed as an appearance and then this same non-existent thing disappeared from view. Creation and destruction are of this category. In truth then, there never was any creation and so there never will be a dissolution. These recurring phenomenal appearances are due to vasanas and so if these vasanas are got rid of, these appearances vanish, just as what is not perceptible in darkness is revealed in light. These vasanas can be discerned only by enquiry.

Gross objects, our body included, are illusions arising on the basis of the "I"-thought and partaking of its nature. If these illusions are suppressed, then the "I" thought, completely shorn of all such accretions, merges itself in the Supreme.

When the "Chith" is in a dynamic state, appearances such as "self" and world phenomena wear an air of Reality. And yet when our mind is turned towards the Supreme Being, appearances are not perceived, just as objects before our eyes are not perceived when the mind is engaged otherwise.

The foregoing is the only means of advancement, that is, enquiry. This enquiry is about the nature of the "Self" and the relationship between the Self and the world of objects. This enquiry must be diligently pursued till the last breath of a man's life. One's own zeal and hard thinking on these problems will alone be of any use.

Association with the wise should also be sought. The wise are those who are acknowledged by all as

such. Their knowledge and experience will be of invaluable help in clarifying our minds. With persistent enquiry, the mind becomes more and more clear and subtle. But if one decides to seek the help of a number of learned people to advance one's own knowledge, then they should not be consulted at the same time, as this will only create confusion. For, even such learned people have their own pet theories and prejudices. So, one must go to them one after another. I have learnt this from my own experience. However, whatever one may learn from a Guru, all that knowledge must be subjected to one's own scrutiny.

All appearances which arise in one's imagination disappear as soon as imaginative activity ceases, just as poison may turn into nectar. The purpose of all imaginative activity is enjoyment and so when imagination subsides, thirst for enjoyment also subsides. The way to attain quiescence of imaginative activity is to ignore mentally and verbally the differentiating significances of words.

All people are beset with two kinds of misery in life, viz.: illness of mind and illness of body. Illness of body, arising always out of enjoyment, can be cured by medicines being administered during this life. Enjoyment in other worlds, known as the great illness, can be obtained only through the nectar of association with the wise and equanimity of mind. This must be done in this life.

All life springs from the eternal Truth. The world is its manifestation. It partakes of the nature of the atom as well as the entire universe. Object, perception and imagination are false phenomena arising in Samvith. They disappear only at the time of Mahapralaya or the great Dissolution. All that is known as the inherent nature of objects indicate only Brahman and not the objects. Everything of the nature of perceptions is like the waves in the ocean. Brahman may be said to be that which has not got a nature of its own. This phenomenal world is an appearance which has arisen in it spontaneously. The cause for this is like motion being the cause for the wind. In general, in all things which are said to have a nature of their own, the effect must inhere in the cause. The cause can be traced only in its own experience.

Desires.

Rama! You should try to remain steadfast like the core of a rock, unmoved and with all desires cast out. You must, to all intents and purposes, be like a statue, with a mind that is completely still and unresponsive, but carrying on such work as comes unsought, like a flute that produces all sorts of musical sounds without a desire of its own. Whatever senses are functioning, there should be no sort of reactions arising out of them. All miseries, which sometimes may be likened to what is experienced in hell, arise out of such reactions. The bliss arising out of a reactionless state cannot be obtained even in Heaven. Desires are known by the name of chitta and when these subside completely, we call it the state of

Moksha. Conquest of desires far surpasses, in its results, other methods such as religious or other routine observances, tapas, study of shastras and so forth. To effect the conquest of desires which are really illnesses of the mind, only self-effort is of use. No other path can lead to it. It is desires that swell to a mighty samsara.

Truly speaking there is no reason why these desires should arise at all. When all are nothing but Chith and when Chith pervades everything, who is to desire what? Chith has no form or substance and is subtler than the subtlest and the appearances that arise in this, such as the "I" thought and the world, are equally so. So how can desires arise at all? Wise men do not make the distinction of knowing subject and known object. In the state of Nirvana there is no perception of object. So long as there is the experience of objective perception, Nirvana is not attained, just as light and darkness cannot be in the same place. In the state of oneness there can be no causal relationship. If any such be perceived, then it is also Brahman, as motion is not different from air. So then desires too are nothing but Brahman, as pots made of clay are not different from clay.

Rama : If desires too are Brahman, why should they be condemned and why should we try to discard them?

Vasishta : True! The wise have no need for any effort to discard them since all desires are dead in them by reason of their having shed the ego and the

sense of duality or objectivity. Desires can arise only when one has not shed the sense of duality. When all are identical, what can desire which? Both the sense of desire or the absence of it are mere percepts arising in Consciousness or, in other words mental concepts. Since the imaginative activity is completely suppressed in the truly wise men, neither of these percepts dawn on their mental horizon. What ever is perceived by them is realised as pure Consciousness. Even if what is a desire in us arises in their minds, it does not bring about the effects of a desire in them. It is identified with Consciousness which is of the nature of Sunyam or No-thingness. When therefore something is reflected in such a Consciousness, then that thing must also partake of the nature of Sunyam. Hence all that we call percepts or objects or our imaginative creations must also be of the nature of Sunyam. What then can one achieve in this vast and limitless No-thingness?

But the mass of mankind, who are steeped in ignorance, consider that these truly non-existing things have an abiding existence and are real. That is, however, their experience. So these varied percepts can arise only in their minds, since they voluntarily court such ideas, instead of keeping their minds at peace. All the same, what they perceive as a tree, animal, mountain, river or the universe are no more than empty imaginings. Hence all kinds of percepts, of whatever nature they are, are merely perceptible or imperceptible imaginings which are of the nature of Sunyam or in other words tracks of Consciousness

The all-pervading Chith experiences the world phenomena as its own false percepts arising within its own womb. The creative process of Chith is identical with that of Brahman. This creative process too is as immobile or unchanging as Brahman and is of the nature of pure existence only. But internally it shines as knowledge and externally appears as experience. So it would not be correct to stick to one aspect of the Truth only, since both aspects are percepts of the Chith, which, when not in repose, gives rise to percepts which appear as objects and world phenomena. If objects of perception were mere material objects and of a different category from Chith then no perception can arise at all. If two blocks of wood were lying side by side, the one is not cognisant of the other, since they are devoid of perceptive faculty. So, if Chith has the percept of an object, then that object cannot but be of the nature of Chith and identical with it and having the substance of No-thingness. Thus all that is cognised externally amounting to experiences are resolved to empty No-thingness internally. They are not of a different species. So the Knower, the knowledge and the known are one.

Just as the property of flow is inherent in water, Chith is inherent in the Atman. Chith, when not in repose, is in a dynamic state, and appears as imaginative or creative faculty which in turn gives rise to prana, intellect and so on. Hence the entire world of experience is nothing but the dynamic aspect of Chith in various states.

All material objects have form and substance, although comprising atoms only. The tree sprouts from the seed man grows out of the semen so that the essences of these creations are latent in the atoms of which they are composed. Brahman is then the essence of the sources of all these multifarious types of atoms. Hence the entire objective world can be said to be rooted only in Brahman and must therefore be of the nature of Brahman. In our experience objects appear no different from dream phenomena. People like me experience these acts of creation and destruction only as such dream phenomena. Just as we can create a flower or a tree or something else in the emptiness of our imagination, so also has this objective world been a product of imagination of Chith which is subsequently experienced as world phenomena by us.

All this objective world which is of the nature of Atman can stand rooted only in Atman. The cosmic and false appearance as objective world cannot take its rise in Atman. The nature of Atman if its expression can be used at all when speaking about Atman is to be ever and continually in perfect repose. The nature of ignorance on the other hand is to present endless false appearances such as constitutes the world phenomena. If every object were rooted in its own nature, then how can creation be said to have taken place? Which can be created out of what? Then in deep sleep there is no dream and dream one does not sleep in like manner there can be no sense of delusion in Atman, nor the presence

of Atman in delusion. So if one constantly pursues the path of Atman, then delusion will cease to be. Moksha or Release is spoken of only with reference to this kind of practice. If one steps out of the condition of perfect poise even for a second, then the mind expands and is then capable of embracing the whole universe like a drop of oil extending over the entire surface of water in a trice. So the wise men always pursue the path of keeping the mind free from contact with objects or ideas i.e. absolutely disengaged. To the wise, the world phenomena is as insipid and uninteresting as the recollections of dream phenomena are to us in our waking state.

If it be held that the Chith, when not in its natural state of repose, becomes aware of world phenomena, then this world phenomena cannot be different from Chith just as fluidity is not different from water nor emptiness from akasa. The same sort of identity must be held to be true between Chith and world phenomena. Even though they are named differently, their substance is the same. So they cannot be considered either as being different from each other or that they are identical. There is only one principle in Truth. The wise realise it as Chith whereas the ignorant experience it as world phenomena. Thus, the experience each one has of one and the same thing is dependent on his mental outlook. Thus, Truth is one but named variously as absolute poise or Brahman or pure Intelligence or Sanyam.

Various ornaments made of gold are primarily gold. If the scene of two forces fighting each other be sculptured in stone, they remain stone and cannot be called forces. In these two examples the circumstances giving rise to other ideas continue to be in their own nature and do not divest themselves of it. And in the same manner that the forces in stone are of no real use to us as forces, so, also these ideas are world phenomena in us are of no real significance, since the source of these ideas continues to remain in its pristine purity. Nor can we attribute cause-effect relationship to them and if we do the effect is not different from cause. Therefore, this world phenomena is also Brahman. If one follows the principles explained in this work and practises them after diligent enquiry, he is bound to free himself from the shackles of samsara and attain to the state of highest wisdom. But if one discards this highest path and immerses himself in various activities of purification, placing his faith in the efficacy of Puja, mantras, visiting sacred places, charity, Yoga and so forth, there is no redemption for him. In the shastras one wades through both wise and ignorant precepts and principles. But what is mentioned in this work is the very essence of all these shastras. So it is highly desirable to ponder over what is contained in this work.

In general most people are wallowing only in ignorance. Wisdom slowly trickles in with gathering experience. Such men delude themselves into thinking that they are steeped in wisdom and propound their faiths to other people. In this way has grown

innumerable creeds and dogmas every one of which commands a large following.

What we have been considering hitherto is about controlling the mind. This mind is like a deer caught in a thick forest infested with wild animals. Danger lurks at every turn, which may be in the shape of hunters or wild animals or a storm. The fate of our minds is likewise. After innumerable lives passed in tortures akin to those in Hell leading to recurring perplexities, a state of detachment is attained which finally leads us to the path of wisdom. It is only in this state of vairagya that one's inclination turns to enquiry of the shastras and association with the wise. After a long period spent in such enquiry or association, one gets freed from desire and aversion; whereupon the mind subsides. Thereafter he becomes successively established in freedom from the thralldom of the vasanas, suppression of the imaginative faculty and finally in freeing himself from the sense of duality. It is only in this state that we can enjoy abiding peace.

When, after attaining this state, one looks back on the mind which had toiled so long amidst utter misery, one fails to find even a trace of its whereabouts. It is quenched like a lamp without oil. Such a soul is verily Knowledge itself. This is the true or natural state of every being. If one slips from this state ever so little, then he gets entangled in samsara which is foreign to him. The state of dhyana is also applicable only to the true state, since only in that

state one can see an enduring and unchanging state. But ordinarily people refer to the one-pointed state of mind as dhyana, which is wrong, since it also amounts to a modification of the mind. In dhyana, there should be no sense of duality either preceding it or succeeding it. This can be realised only in the state we have mentioned above.

It is only such a person that is referred to as Iswara. The presiding Atma in our own selves is the Iswara that people talk about. When one reaches a state of vairagya towards samsara, he turns to the path of wisdom, as if enjoined by the messenger from the Lord within. Then one climbs step by step on to the highest state of wisdom.

In the state of single blessedness described above, all that remains is the shining light of wisdom. Objects and ideas appear also as only light and not as objects and ideas external to it. Or, we might say that the external world and its contents appear as dream phenomena. When a number of coloured objects are in the proximity of a white crystal it reflects the colours of the objects. The crystal is not tarnished by these colours. In like manner, pure Intelligence presents the appearance of multifarious objects. But, be it understood that they are mere appearances and there is neither substance nor weight in them, as we seem to think. There is none other than pure Intelligence in that state. So there can be no bondage since the source of all bondage namely "mind" is non-existent. Even the thought of bondage

in this state would be like taking shelter under a tree that is to grow at some future time in the emptiness of akasa.

Thus it is to be realised that the objects of the world have no real substance in them nor form. These ideas of form and substance are experienced by us constantly by virtue of our zeal to perceive. The solidification of our ideas is transferred to the so-called objects of the external world. Again the sense of multifariousness also arises from the parent state of unity, as many kinds of ornaments not existing before are fashioned out of a lump of gold. All these arise out of our imagination. What does truly exist internally and externally is pure Intelligence. But, just as dreams are experienced as real while dreaming and are realised to be unreal in the waking state, so also do objects present to us a sense of reality by reason of the intense persistence of our preceptive faculty, so long as wisdom has not dawned. The differences perceived between objects have been accentuated by the elaboration of words, essential for purposes of mutual communication, to stress such differences. In the course of long years of usage, these wordy differences have established a sense of reality about them in our minds. This had been made possible because of our ignorance. Even the very expressions Knowledge and Ignorance are admissible only for communication and not as verities for, in truth, there is only one all pervading principle. According to what we have established, our bodily organ is a gross representation

of our own subtle mind. By virtue of its over zealous imagination, the mind has assumed a form and substance. But at the dawn of knowledge these perceptive faculties lose their intensity and the mind gradually subsides, so that body-consciousness also gets feebler and feebler and finally, when all vasa-nas have been lived out, the body-consciousness has no peg to hang on.

This world peopled by multifarious species of beings subordinated to sense perceptions, such as the human beings, Nagas' Asuras, Ghandarvas, etc. may be classified as being in one of the seven states of existence. These states are:-

(1) dream perception; (2) imaginative perception; (3) perception; (4) intense perception; (5) very acute perception; (6) perceptive dreaminess; and (7) vanishing perception.

The mental beings that originated first were in a state of deep slumber and thereafter spontaneously began to dream. It is this dream world of theirs that we experience now. And we are the dream personages of that world. Although they ceased to exist long ago, those dreams having been dreamt again and again over a long period of time took form and substance and is now functioning as our bodily organ. The original dream that we spoke of is the sense of "I" which is the source of all thoughts or perceptions. Their followers were always in a state of imaginative activity. Their state of awakening consisted in being continually exercising their imaginative

faculty. These beings were succeeded by the plant Kingdom which is deemed to be in a state of perception and then came the animal Kingdom which is said to be in a state of intense perception. The other three states refer to human beings.

Rama: Why did all these beings come into this state of perceptive existence, for no reason and without any purpose, from out of the Supreme Being?

Vasishta: When there is no valid cause for a thing, then there is no effect either. Even otherwise, what have these beings achieved by their perceptive or waking states? Really they were not created at all. But we use such modes of expression in order to impart true Knowledge to the ignorant.

Rama: If these beings were never created, then by what agency have these mortal bodies, Mind, Intellect, change etc. have been brought into existence? How does desire or aversion arise?

Vasishta: Our body as well as mind is a modification of time, place and causation. Since the effect is dependent on its cause, it cannot be different from the cause. But no valid cause can be attributed to the act of creation. And so the only conclusion that we arrive at is that nothing was ever created at any time. This is the truth that we expound again and again. What we sense about us are our sense perceptions which have no substance about them. Since at

the dawn of Knowledge these perceptions subside, the objects cannot be considered to be real. Although there is a sense of reality about dream objects during that state, we realise them to be false perceptions on waking. In like manner what now appears to be real by reason of our ignorance is experienced as false and as a dream at the dawn of Knowledge.

Since all objects become known only by the light of Knowledge, they cannot be different from Knowledge. It is the pure Intelligence that appears both as Knowledge and Ignorance. Without the light of Intelligence, nothing is ever perceived. Just as the future sculptured figures lie latent in the stone pillar, and many kinds of ornaments lie latent in the mass of gold, so also do the objects and ideas that are revealed to our senses lie latent in Intelligence. Pure Intelligence pervades everything, everywhere inside and outside and therefore there cannot be a second to it.

Rama: Please tell me then how these perceptions of objects and the world came out of this pure Intelligence or all-embracing Knowledge.

Vasishta: This objective world and its contents are truly such that we cannot perceive them in a different manner from what the trees and plants do. In spite of it we perceive the unreal world differently i. e. as being real, by reason of our own over-luxuriant imaginative faculty. This world is just as real as the water in the mirage. Let us for the sake of

argument grant that it is real. Then what does it result in. It leads to the conclusion that all the things of the world must perish and disappear at the end of the world cycle of events. Then if every object be dissected more and more minutely, then at a particular stage they will cease to exist. Then if all the created things perish, then perishes the Creator too, since all the created things together are none other than the Creator Himself. Then the Creator loses his omniscience, his state of being and becoming: Then there is another faith which declares that Intelligence pervades every atomic particle. If so, if all beings perish at the end of the world cycle then Intelligence also ceases to be. Then how is one to know the final dissolution. So all these theories are untenable. Only our conception will stand, viz: that the world of perceptions is a dream phenomenon.

A world that is said to be created is faced with a final dissolution; then how can it be recreated when there is nothing from which it can be created, nor an agent to do so? Or, if it be said that creation will take place as before, there would be none to vouchsafe for it. Or, if it be said that the same world will rise again, then there will be no dissolution which is against all reason. Nor can we say that another world will come into being, since the very words are contradictory and one world cannot change into another. If we say that the world in dissolution would be in an unmanifest state like akasa, even then dissolution becomes untenable. Hence if creation were to be admitted then dissolution must also be admitted. In that

case, the world phenomena cannot be different from Brahman, since the effect cannot be different from the cause, as has been established by us. Both are identical. The cause displaced in space and time appears as the effect. It is the seed of a plant that puts on the appearance of root, stem, branches, flowers and fruits. Every part of the plant is suffused with only the essence of the seed. Similarly our perceptions in the shape of the world and its objects cannot be different from Brahman. It is in this manner that the Shastras have to be enquired into searchingly and every statement weighed and reasoned out before coming to conclusions.

The conclusion we reach as a result of this searching enquiry is that the world of perceptions is no more than dream phenomena. In the state of pure Being that is characteristic of Brahman, when a perception arises, then we have the experience of a phenomenal appearance. This phenomenal appearance cannot be different from Brahman. This is all that comes out of experience. Brahman cannot be established in any other manner, neither by subtle reasoning nor by discussion.

Then, Brahman may be conceived of as having within itself all phenomenal appearances in a latent state, like the examples of water and waves or a stone and its images. All these are within its bosom in a non-existent state. When all world phenomena subside, such as Time, Space, energy, the five fundamental principles, five sense organs and when there is

no second object or idea, then that state is called Mahapralaya or the final dissolution. That state may be said to be the characteristic feature of Brahman. It is beyond word and thought.

But truly this is the state of existence everywhere and at all times. But our mental states, having drifted away from the source, are such as to bring about diverse experiences. The wise are free from reacting tendencies and so worldly activities do not bother them. But the ignorant are slaves to their perceptions and hence they undergo diverse experiences. But what they experience are no more real than the forms and shapes which the clouds sometimes assume. According to the intensity of one's perceptive and reacting tendencies, these false appearances are experienced variously, by some as realities and by others as mere appearances.

Rama: Then how did the various verities and their characteristics originate, such as change, time, akasa, grossness, air solidity, perception and creation?

Vasishta: How can one presume that these imaginative ideas had originated in Brahman, which is in a state akin to that of the Great Dissolution? Where are they in fact? All these together is known as Maha-Chith, only by virtue of the fact that they are rooted in Brahman. This Maha-Chith can only be said to be in a non-existent state.

The eternal truth, which is one without a second, was termed Brahman for purposes of mutual understanding and this was compared to an inert stone. To verify the truth of this statement, I once went to a remote part of the universe, of course in my imagination, uncontaminated by anything of this world of our experience. Since this area was in far too remote a corner of this universe, not even the five principal elements could be traced there. In this lonely part of this universe, I built for myself a hut to live in, but it was so constructed that not even an atom could enter it. After all preparations had been made, I lay rolling the five senses and thereupon the mind, without allowing it to move outwards or inwards, I went into the state of samadhi. In this condition, I was in the same state as the all-pervading Chith i. e. a state in which "I" pervaded everything. I spent a hundred years in this manner.

As soon as the pre-determined period had elapsed, I naturally woke up from my samadhi. The hundred years seemed to have passed off in a trice. As soon as I became alive to my surroundings, the bodily characteristics began to assert themselves and I reverted to the feeling of "Self" and the accompanying traits like intellect, mind and so forth. All the same, since I had as yet no outgoing tendencies, the mind was in a tranquil state. In this state I heard a sweet voice. Where it came from and what its purport was, was not apparent to me. After a while I recognised it as a woman's voice coming from afar

and so, intending to ascertain where it came from, I looked around. It was surprising indeed to feel the presence of a woman in a place so far removed from this visible universe, where not a speck of dust could exist. After a long time the woman came to me voluntarily. When I asked her what her object was in paying a visit to me, she replied that she came only in quest of me. But I paid no heed to what she said and so I left her, went back to my hut and seated myself again in padmasana pose.

Then controlling my outgoing mind and remaining in the state of Chith, I looked about. Then I observed countless numbers of creations, every one of them being different from the rest and all these were being destroyed and recreated. Every one of these creations was quite oblivious of the others. Many gods, many suns and moons were noticed. One creation without Sun or Moon, many Vasistas like me, were all witnessed by me. But as all these phenomena were witnessed in the state of Chith, they could only be called dream phenomena. Only when objects are seen with the aid of the bodily organs of sense, do the objects appear to have form and substance. So, form and substance are not the characteristics of objects; they are the defects of the organs of sense. Hence objects appear to us differently from what they really are. Thus objects and their so called characteristics are empty nothings seen against a background of No-thing. The seer and the objects seen are both Chith but, because of the intervention of the defective organs of sense, we get wrong

perceptions of the objects with which we come into contact in the act of seeing. This body and its organs are both unreal and perishable and so they are not competent to know the powers of the Chith which is the Reality and is imperishable. Then in our dreams we see only such things as form part of our waking experience. But we do not derive any enjoyment out of them as our bodily organs are not in association with them. In like manner, when the mind is in the state of Chith, a like experience is obtained i.e. body-contact being absent, all that is witnessed in that state can only be likened to dream phenomena. So we suffer from an abiding delusion in believing the unreal world to be real and the real Chith to be unreal. This directly contradictory experience arises out of our ignorance. One would know the Truth if searching enquiry be made. The wise look upon the world only in this manner.

Rama: After the great dissolution, when every thing is released from bondage and has attained Moksha, how does fresh creation take place?

Vasishta: All creation and dissolution take place in Brahman and so it is clear that it is Brahman that is experienced as creation or dissolution. The world of our experience cannot also be other than Brahman. So if we look at Brahman from the point of view of creation and dissolution, then there is room in Brahman for countless numbers of creations and dissolutions but if we view it otherwise, then there can be no talk of creation or dissolution.

How Brahman sees the multifarious phenomena taking place within itself without experiencing them may be likened to the experience of a tree about its branches, leaves or flowers or to that of an ocean about all that it holds.

Rama: Well, then! how could you see the lady, while remaining in your hut?

Vasishta: As I was one with Chith at that time, I was all-pervasive and so could perceive anything anywhere. Further, I saw her only in my mental world which is quite easy.

Rama: If that lady were a pure mental being, bereft of a body and sense organs, how could any sound emanate from her?

Vasishta: I experienced the sounds emanating from her in the same manner as we experience objects, activities, speech and so forth in dreams, i.e. in the subtle state. It is true that activities such as bodily movements, speech and so forth cannot be experienced in a disembodied state. Dead bodies for instance do not speak nor hear. But all the same we do have experience of grossness and gross bodies in our dreams, although the phenomena occur out of contact with gross bodies and organs. So these phenomena take place in Chith and they are experienced as dreams by Chith. When one is in a state akin to Chith i.e. in an all pervasive state and also in a state of activity, what wonder is there in perceiving all that takes place in Chith. Then the next

question is how do you prove the existence of a gross body? It is only a perception of ours, having arisen out of our repeatedly imagining it in that manner, or in other words, it is also a sort of activity taking place in Chith and is subtle in character. Then how can grossness be established?

To return to the lady in question, she came back to me and made her obeisances before me. I asked her name and parentage and then to tell me the object with which she sought me in this lonely place outside the pale of the universe. She replied that she would narrate the story of her life and that, after hearing it patiently, I should try to grant her request.

THE STORY OF THE VIDYADHARI

Vidyadhari : I belong to the class of Vidyadharas. I am married and my husband is living on the summit of the hills on the edge of the universe. We live in one of the caves on the hill, the life of an inert statue. My husband is a brahmin and well versed in the Vedas and leads the life of a purohit.

Having started learning the Vedas very early in life and spent all his life in its study, he grew up without the knowledge of the affairs of wordly life. As however the shastras enjoin marriage he created a wife for himself in his imagination and that is me. Even after the marriage he was immersed in the study of Vedas only. Not knowing the ways of the world, nor the nature of women, neither their needs,

nor their care, he has been leading an absolutely insipid tasteless life. He has just the wisdom that one can expect of a purohit. So the lives of both of us are being spent uselessly.

You will notice that you cannot find in all the three worlds any woman to match me for beauty. I have the gift of being ever-youthful. No one can fail to lose his heart after seeing my beauty of form, charm of manners and my character. But all this is being wasted. Oh! what good is a lovely and enchanting garden in a place away from the habitations of men? In like manner all my youth is being wasted away. I have not tasted any of the pleasures or comforts of life. What worse fate can befall a woman than to be denied the affections of a loving husband. The life's ambition for a woman and her salvation lies in securing a loving husband. There are four most worthless things or conditions in this world which cannot be surpassed by any other thing or condition, viz: (1) wealth in the hands of the wicked; (2) intelligence without experience; (3) heart lost to a prostitute; and (4) the insipid life led by a young maiden. Having been destined to lead such an empty useless life, I lost all interest in life and discarded all desires. What gave pleasure to others gave me only pain now. Whatever delighted the sight of others, fell flat on me. Even a bed of roses was felt by me to be one of fire. No wonder then that I attained complete desirelessness and sought the means of attaining salvation. Along with this I practised yoga and the art of flying in order to visit wise and holy men, wherever they

may be found. In the course of such wanderings I happened to meet you. At the very sight of you I felt that there is none to equal you in all the three worlds to impart the path of wisdom.

What I request of you now is to teach my husband and myself the path of wisdom and enable us to obtain final Release. The life led by my husband now is without a purpose. It is better to cease to exist than to lead such a life. Final Release is the only goal for both of us. I surrender myself to you for that purpose.

Vasishta : After hearing her life story, I wanted to visit her world and her abode and after informing her about it and obtaining her consent, I set out with her thither in imagination. After crossing many worlds and reaching our destination on a hill top at the edge of the universe, I found in the indicated spot nothing but a massive rock. Immediately I questioned her and spoke to her thus :—

"A world signifies an earth with a sky and nether regions, Sun, Moon and stars, human beings, animal and plant Kingdom, besides Devas and Asuras. All these are needed to make a world. Not one of them is to be seen here. All that I can see is a mighty rock formation. Where has your world vanished?" To this, she gave such a charming and intelligent reply that I was surprised myself.

Vidyadhari : Do you really not see the world of my experience? How strange! But I see it even now within my self like the reflection from a mirror. But

the reason for this is that I had been experiencing them all through my life; but since your experiences had been different you do not perceive them as I do. Since I was for a long time obsessed with the sense of duality, the pure subtle body took on a gross body. Like the shape of a tree seen in empty akasa, I began to experience these thoughts of their existence repeatedly over long periods of time. All such experiences can be obtained only by what is called "the yoga of practice" and not from Shastras, or by any other means. Whatever one wishes to obtain can be obtained only through his own efforts and not by any of tricks or unexpected means. My experiences, of the world I spoke about, were due to my ignorance. But when one realises this and pursues the path of wisdom, such false phenomena would not be perceived. Since I was young and inexperienced, I perceived the world I spoke to you about. But you are steeped in wisdom and so you do not perceive that false world.

There is nothing in this world that cannot be attained by proper effort. One can powder a mountain. If one has to hit at a target with an arrow it can be achieved only by incessant practice. In like manner the world phenomena was experienced by me by my having pursued the path of ignorance. But if I had pursued the path of wisdom, I could not have had that experience. By continued use or practice, even poison may taste like nectar or strangers would become friends. By not caring to remember, even relatives become strangers. Though the subtle body is

in essence pure and identical with Chith, it has established an intimate relation with a gross body, so as not to be easily separated from it, by incessantly brooding over it. All that is necessary to fulfil our desires is effort and practice. The Jiva is enshrined in the body only because of the association having been a long established desire. A life spent without effort is spent in vain but such effort must be directed towards enquiry into the nature of the Atma and freeing oneself from the shackles of bondage. They are fools who do not devote their lives to this purpose. In this matter "practice" is yoga. So if you recall your old life and practices, you would also see the same world as I see in this rock.

Vasishta : When I heard these words of wisdom from the Vidyadhari, I made up my mind to see her world as she saw it and accordingly seated myself in padmasana pose. Discarding all thoughts about the body and existence and non-existence I was in a state of identity with the light of Intelligence. In that state there was no sense perception of any object. Everywhere there was only the light of Intelligence densely packed, imparting a sense of heaviness. All objects were perceived, in this state, in the same way as in dreams i. e. as shadows without substance. The state of ripe wisdom may be likened to that of a person who wakes up from a dream, while he himself is the object of another person's dream. This state is reached by everyone at some period, since without doubt even the worst of men must attain wisdom at some time. What we say in this work will all become clear in that state.

This gross body that we are saddled with was originally identical with Chith, then became separated as a gross body by being constantly brooded upon. This outgoing tendency is designated by us as imaginative faculty. It is this subtle body that is actually experienced by us and may be said to be the body proper. It may be called a variant of Chith. This forms the subtle or the first body for the Jiva and it is the most important one too. What is called the yogic perception or true perception refers to this. But ordinarily we do not accept it as such. The perishable body is considered to be real by us. We hold the form of bangle as real forgetting the gold of which it is made. If proper enquiry be made, it will be realised that the gross body cannot at all be perceived. It is a delusion created by the sense organs. The popular belief is just contrary to the Truth. The gross body is continually subject to change and then perishes. Whereas, the subtle body extends its sway over the past, present and future and has the nature of immortality. Placing our faith in this gross body would be like quenching the thirst with the water from the mirage. We steep ourselves in fleeting pleasures and lose the lasting peace. We should not pin our faith on the objects revealed by the senses, which are subject to change and destruction. Reality is that which is abiding and not subject to change and it can never be established by means of the ephemeral body and organs which can neither know the past nor the future. So, when experience, which takes precedence in the matter of validity, is itself of no value, what need then to

talk of establishing Reality by other means, such as inference and so forth. What is not apparent to the senses but which yet manifests itself in all our activities is what is known as Chith and it is not different from Brahman. This is the Truth established by means of true experience or perception.

The world of the Vidyadhari's experience is such a world, viz: constructed by her imagination. This is "self", this is a mountain, this is a river, such ideas were formed by her and subsequently experienced as such. The truth behind these mental delusions will be perceived only at the dawn of real knowledge. The ignorant cannot know it just as one who has not heard a story cannot enjoy it.

Then at the request of the Vidyadhari, I went with her to see her husband. He was seated in a state of Samadhi. Then the Vidyadhari said: "He is the creator of this world and is my husband; he created me too in order to marry me but did not live a married life up to my present old age." Then she announced me to her husband and requested him to do the duties of a host.

This Brahma came out of his Samadhi after a little while and opened his eyes. Immediately there appeared around him Devas, Rishis and Siddhas, all of whom seated themselves before him. Then the Brahma, after welcoming me, requested me to tell him about the object of my visit. I told him the manner of my meeting the Vidyadhari, about her request

to me for imparting her the knowledge for Release and about her life story which she had told me. I told him moreover that her life story was inconsistent. Then Brahma spoke thus

THE BRAHMA OF ANOTHER WORLD

"Oh! thou, foremost among the Rishis. Hear the truth from me. What truly exists is the one Supreme Being. A spontaneous movement that arose in it brought me into being creating a sense of duality. I am also a subtle being. As my existence is due to a spontaneous circumstance, I am considered as self-created. I am ever in contemplation of the Atman. I am not alive to differences like "thou" and "I". I do not know of a world of perception. This lady is also a subtle being having arisen in the subtle Cosmic Being. But she got entangled in the idea of "self", became rooted in it and was caught in the whirlpool of samsara. By her own vasanas or deep-rooted desires, she constructed a world of her own in her abode of rock and desired to get me as her husband. In truth I am neither her husband nor is she my wife.

As I am always in the contemplation of the Supreme Being, the great dissolution is about to set in, after this brief spell. In this state one is in an advanced state of Vairagya, with all present desires dissolved, all past desires worked off and freed from the illusory body, after having shed all ideas of space and time. He will then be in a state of absolute Repose

Even the gods stand dissolved. Just as the waters of the ocean appear as the activity of waves, so also do vasanas spring into activity of waves. Such desires manifest themselves in the body. But if the desires be directed towards the Atman then that is achieved. If, on the other hand, one clings on to activity his world expands. Such activity may manifest itself even in an atom. Such activity is worlds, not different from dream phenomena, identical with Chith. All such appearances are of the stir in the ocean of Brahman. In reality nothing ever happens. All are in repose and spotlessly pure."

Vasishta: After this he said that he intended to turn back to the contemplation of Atma and accordingly withdrew his mind from all ideas of the external world. As soon as the ideas of solidity, fluidity, tejas, motion etc. were withdrawn, the external world with all its contents and even the sun and moon disappeared gradually. The final dissolution had taken place and there was nothing but a great stillness.

Rama: It is now clear to me that Brahma is a mental Being and without form and also that the world phenomena arise from Him. But how does this act of creation, this objective world and its contents all appear in him and yet are not different from him?

Vasishta: It is the spontaneous activity that arises in the vast expanse of the unchanging and pure

Chith that continues as the unending activity. This activity is nothing but a change from the abiding state. This activity is called Jiva and when the activity becomes many sided, it descends to the state known as mind. Although various states are thus passed through, nothing substantial is achieved thereby; since all are only in a subtle state. What really took place was, what may be called, an appearance of a reflected being, was seized with the idea "self," which creates the delusion of being different from Atma. This Jiva then indulging in pure imaginative activity conceives of forms and thereafter experiences them too. Form and substance then are pure perceptions which had originated from imaginative activity. Thus nothing real or substantial had taken place. All that the Jiva imagines is then perceived and thereafter results in experiences. So, if imaginative activity subsides then all these phenomenal appearances also subside resulting in absolute repose.

This world then is also such a phenomenal appearance. It is a dream of the Jiva. All that can take place, does so only in the vast emptiness as pure activity; then wherefrom can this world of our perceptions get its mighty form and substance? What extraneous conditions were there, of a like nature, that could have helped its creation? Where there was nothing, no form or substance where from could this universe have been fashioned. So the only valid conclusion that we can arrive at is that the world was never created, in the sense we mean. But if you say

that we are feeling it all the same every moment of our lives, the only reply to it is that they are mere appearances in emptiness.

Rama: If bondage, Release, perception and so forth are neither true nor false, then they were never created and so are not dissolved either. Then in what state does this phenomenal world exist at all?

Vasishta: The whole objective world including all its contents, plant and animal life, the five principal elements, time, space, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, all of them dissolve during the Maha-Pralaya. This is a state beyond speech and thought. For ease of comprehension it is often stated that, if the grossness of akasa and mount Meru be compared, then so gross is Brahman when compared to mount Meru. Or, again, the sun's rays are no more subtle, when compared to mount Meru, than what Brahman is when compared to the Sun's rays. So in this vast and illimitable No-thingness, space, time, form and so forth, though really non-existent, seem to exist in the form of percepts, atomic in nature. These percepts arose as spontaneously as do our dreams and out of pure imaginative activity. Therefore they are as unreal as the dreams; all the same they are considered to be another way of expressing Brahman. But we have been using the expression Chith to denote it. This all pervading Chith imagines within itself the atomic state and then experiences it. This gives rise to the sense of duality as Knower and Known. When a man dreams about his own death, then the person that is

dead and the one that is a witness to it are one and the same entity. Similarly the knower and the known are one and the same Chith. In spite of this identity, the sense of duality had arisen spontaneously and had become rooted in all beings and sprouted out, just as the seed gradually sprouts up, into a mighty tree.

With this original product of imagination, viz: the sense of duality as basis, other ideas also gradually grew such as space, time and activity. Where the Chith manifests itself, there arises the consciousness of space as here, there and so forth. Similarly arises consciousness of points of time. Then the act of knowing gives rise to activity. From these, then, successively appeared sense of objectivity, name, form and substance, then the five sense of perceptions and the physical body. All these were products of the imaginative activity which subsequently developed into experiences. It will be noticed that every one of them is just a percept and no more, taking place in akasa. Such percepts, after millions of repetitions, condense themselves, so to say, so as to appear as a solid substance. In this manner the five different kinds of percepts gave rise to five different organs of perception, also purely by imaginative faculty. It is in this manner the plant and the animal world came successively on this scene. During all the successive stages of evolution the change that occurred at each step was spontaneous, although subsequently it takes the form of a law of Nature. The gods Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra too were

creations of the imaginative activity of Chith; worms and insects arose also in a like manner.

The substance of what was said hitherto is that imaginative activity taking place spontaneously on a micro-atomic scale gives rise to the phenomena known as our physical body and the external world.

Only that can be perceived outside which was previously imagined; nothing else. That is to say, our bodies as well as the external world arose in like manner in all respects. So what resides inside is identical with what is perceived outside. Hence, the three worlds are contained in every atom of Chith. Since this Chith-anu (atom) perceives the phenomenal world, it must continue to remain unchanged if it is to experience or enjoy what it perceives. That means, no change is ever suffered by Chith. Chith continues to remain always as Chith.

To continue our story, I desired to see the Creator of the world and also his creation which erstwhile suffered dissolution. Of course I saw them in the shape of immovable statues. They appeared to me like shadows thrown on empty space. But this was all an instantaneous phenomenon; for at the next moment everything appeared to be no more than a remembrance, like a dream that is recalled after waking up. All had attained salvation: Just as form and shape appear in dreams, in like manner is this body of ours experienced as a solid body because of vasanas (i. e. habituation). Then when these vasanas are neutralised the physical body disappears like the

dreams which disappear on waking up. Vasanas neutralised represents the state of wisdom. In this state everything is perceived as just an appearance. In this matter, dream phenomenon alone is the one that explains the great Truth correctly.

The view of those who do not accept this Truth and who consider the body as real, leads to stupid conclusions. They aver that the perceptions arising in the waking and dream states depend on the state of body and may be as amusing as the perceptions of one under the influence of liquor. If this were true, then the jiva of one who dies in a far-off country should not become an object of perception to some of his erstwhile relatives or friends in his own home. This has been the experience of many people. Then the mental states, mentioned in the puranas, of enjoying the delights of Heaven or experiencing the horrors of Hell will also prove to be wrong. But these experiences do take place after death. These statements are made even in the Vedas. If the Vedas themselves, which have come down from some of the most eminent men, should not be given credence, why should we give credence to the views of these men? If their view were correct then there should result total annihilation to a person after his death. But this world and its contents has always appeared as it is today. The world will never cease to be.

The conclusion from all this is that whatever is imagined in the light of Knowledge, that is subsequently experienced. This is what is designated as

bondage arising from vasanas. If vasanas are neutralised then that state is Nirvana or Absolute Freedom.

To resume our story, after the great dissolution, I saw in that vast void a mighty form which extended over all the three worlds, not leaving even an inch of vacant space. This vast form then began to dance the dance of Death. I wondered what this signified and on reflection I realised that it represented the annihilation of all the "self" ideas discarded by those that had erstwhile obtained absolute freedom. It is this that had been responsible for the creative effort in all the three worlds bringing forth Devas, asuras and men and other beings of the world. The world cannot subsist so long as this "I" thought does not prevail. When it is annihilated the whole world is annihilated.

A little later, I saw another equally mighty form but of a woman of a hair-raising type, fully bedecked, who too danced like Maha-pralaya. I recognised her to be Bairavi, the shadow of Shiva, I then began to reflect over these two forms and what they indicated.

I realised that Shiva must represent the original "I" thought which, though of the nature of Chidakasa, is always associated with activity. The movement of the "I" thought is what is known as activity. Without this activity it is not possible to be aware of the Chith. It is this activity that gives rise to external appearances. The activity here spoken of is pure imaginative activity. As gold is associated with some form like bangle or ring and so forth, as pungency is associated with chilly or sweetness with sugar or various properties of substances with the substances, Chith is also

associated with activity and manifested by it. If this activity ceases then the Chith itself will be in a state of non-existence. So it is the Chith in the shape of activity that expands as world-forms. Birth, death, substances, bondage, release, doubt, space, time, activity, form, mind, five principal elements, everything in fact is a variant of Chith i. e. pure mental phenomena in the mental plane. Such a universe was seen by me comprised in the two mighty forms mentioned above, after the Maha-pralaya state. These appearances are no better than dream phenomena and appear as real when our vision is dimmed by ignorance. But when seen in the light of wisdom, no form will be there to see. All these picturesque methods of expression are used only to inculcate the Truth to the ignorant. The relation between a word and the object which it denotes is also of this nature. Without such relationship Knowledge cannot be gained. It is on this basis too that perception of grossness is obtained.

Then all percepts are of a subtle nature or akasic. They all arose spontaneously in Chith and experienced by Chith. The objects of our dreams, the things of our imagination, the enjoyment we derive from hearing an interesting story, the things seen with defective vision, are all alike in nature.

Further, mental activity can be realised only through physical activity and without the latter, the former cannot be cognised. The world and its contents represent such physical activity. The activity that

takes place internally is cognised by us as substances externally.

This Bairavi bears many other names derived from various qualities possessed by her, such as Kali, Saraswathi, Gayatri, Parvathi, and so forth. The substances arising out of the subtle activity are stated to adorn her as her ornaments and garlands.

Rama : How is the world created afresh after the Maha-pralaya ?

Vasishta : Creation and dissolution are just our mental phenomena and there really is neither creation nor dissolution. In truth, nothing ever really happens in Brahman since it is always in perfect stillness. Only those wise men who have realised it can know about it. Those who have not realised it continue experiencing the states of creation and dissolution, according to their mental states. Such experiences are limited to them. But at some future time every man must attain to a state of highest wisdom and then he would experience the state of Maha-pralaya. Wisdom does not dawn on everybody simultaneously, since each one experiences a different world having no connection with the world of others. But such world perceptions arise only to those that indulge in imaginative activity.

This world-perception owes its origin to Shiva in the form of "I" thought and his reflection Bairavi. They are also termed Purusha and Prakriti. The expansion and contraction of Prakriti or Sakti gives

rise to the illusions of creation and dissolution. However much this expansion and contraction take place, the Purusha remains unchanged. If the city of our dreams appears to sway this way and that, nothing substantial happens to us. If the reflection of the moon in water appears to be in various motions, the real moon remains unaffected. Or again we may imagine very many pleasant things but they do not give us any real pleasure. In like manner, the expansion and contraction of the reflected being in the shape of Sakti does not affect or cause any change in Brahman in the shape of Shiva.

Returning again to my experience, I saw Bairavi getting tired after her violent dance and then accidentally she happened to touch the form of Shiva. At the same moment her mighty form suddenly began to contract to the size of a hill, then to the size of a human being and thereafter became invisible to the naked eye. Then I tried to see her by my sixth sense, but she was nowhere to be perceived. She had suffered utter dissolution.

I began to ponder over what this meant. I realised that she personified the desire aspect springing from Shiva. It is desire that has produced this illusion of world phenomena. Shiva and Shakti are as inseparable as air and its motion. When the motion ceases the air is still and is not noticeable, so also does the multifarious activity of Shakti subside in Shiva. Just as the accidental contact of Shakti with Shiva changed her to be one with Shiva, similarly in the affairs of men too, at some point of time, during their round of

births and deaths, they will get an yearning to know the Atma accidentally and thereafter by their own efforts reach their goal and finally merge in the Atma. When a river empties itself into the ocean, it loses its name and form; so also does this jiva lose its identity in the Atma. It may also be likened to the shadow of our body disappearing in a real shadow. When a good man accidentally gets into the company of wicked men, he will stay there only as long as he does not know their nature. In like manner men too will wallow in this world only as long as they do not realise its illusory nature. When they grow wise they begin to discard all desires and seek their salvation. This is what we learn from the utter dissolution of Prakriti or Shakti.

What I saw further was that the mighty Shiva form, which had remained motionless and in perfect repose, also began shrinking suddenly and in a little while went the way of Shakti, disappearing completely. What remained in that state was Absolute Repose.

Reflecting over the entire experience, I realised that the vanished world was an appearance in the background of the mighty rock. I wondered if such phenomenal appearances were confined to this one rock. Then I peered into another rock and still another and thereafter many other places and even my own body. Wherever I turned I witnessed a distinct universe. Then I realised that in this vastness every atom contains a world within itself.

Everyone of these worlds was different from the others, unrelated to one another. Some had a few

resemblances, others greater resemblances, still others no resemblance at all. There were young worlds, old worlds, very ancient ones and so forth; in fact countless numbers of them. Some of these worlds were entirely of rock, some entirely of water, some others entirely of Akasa, some were all forests or animals or insects or birds or men and so forth. In one of them, I saw Pandavas and Kauravas, in another I saw Rama being killed by Ravana.

I realised that all these worlds were no other than ideas of various people. Everyone experiences a world of his own according to his ideas or imaginative faculty. The world fashions itself according to the ideas of the person concerned. So in truth one's ideas are his world.

Rama : How then did these empty worlds appear in the vast emptiness ?

Vasishta : When I peered into these innumerable worlds, I was in complete identity with Chith i. e. in an all-pervasive state. From this state I passed on in succession from one state to another, of motion, tejas, fluidity and solidity and obtained experiences of those states. I experienced, then, that all that takes place in this world comprised these states. They appeared to me to be the only phenomena taking place within myself. But when these appearances, seen in mere emptiness, are viewed with the aid of sense organs, then we obtain the perception of form and substance.

Then, after some considerable time, I recovered my mind from these phenomena with some difficulty.

Then, when I turned back to my hut and looked for my physical body, that I had left behind, it was not to be found. In place of that I saw another person, a Siddha radiating effulgence and with a commanding men engaged in contemplation. I began to reflect on what became of my body. I wondered if the Siddha had disposed of the body, after he realised that the hut was untenanted.

Desiring to ascertain who he was, I woke him up from samadhi with some difficulty and requested him to let me know who he was. As he had been in contemplation for a long time, he took some time to become alive to his surroundings and to recall the past and then talked to me.

Siddha: I am one who, for a long long time, got enmeshed in worldly life and its enjoyments like a bee among the flowers which it loathes to leave. After endless troubles and tribulations, some wisdom dawned on me and thereupon I began to ponder over this worldly activity in general. As a result of this enquiry I released myself from all kinds of enslavements and the reactions to perceptions and firmly established myself in the contemplation of Atma. In this condition I roamed about the outskirts of the world and accidentally came across this lonely hut. Without trying to ascertain who might be the owner of the hut I occupied it. It is surely my mistake.

Vasishta: After he told me this, I too excused myself for not having tried to know by myself who he was and after apologising went my way.

Rama: While you were in a subtle state and bereft of a body, how could you either see the Siddha or talk to him?

Vasishta: Seeing, hearing, experiencing, all these different kinds of percepts are dependent upon and in complete consonance with the ideas of the mind. What has not been imagined i. e. what had not previously existed as an idea of the mind cannot be subsequently experienced. But people steeped in the sense of duality and who have thereby enslaved themselves to the bodily needs have little imaginative power. So, for the ideas imagined to become actual experiences requires the aid of time, place and circumstances. Even then the experience will not be complete. But to those like me, who have dispelled the sense of duality, ideas of the mind are immediately turned to experiences. My experience with the Siddha was of this nature. Every one's ideas can become experiences only to him and not to others, just like the dream experiences of one cannot become the experiences of another.

After I left the Siddha, I went about all over like a ghost to find if there were other people. But look where I might, there was not another soul, neither animal, human being, nor a God, nor even a speck. I was absolutely alone in my world and so it is with everybody.

Rama: What is a ghost? In what form does it exist, where does it dwell and what are its activities?

Vasishta : This is a trifling matter but since it is not proper not to answer questions raised during teaching, I shall answer your question.

The ghosts take the form imagined by each person. These ghosts are however not seen or experienced by the brave or the wise, but only by the timid people. Mostly it is seen only in infrequented and lonely, dark places and not seen in bright light or in places frequented by men. Ghosts are seen when there is fear in the minds of men. To be quite plain, only those who firmly believe in ghosts do also see ghosts, since they are none other than what is projected from their own minds.

Thus, released from the five sense-perceptions, I roamed about all over without even being seen or sensed by anybody, man or ghandarva, Vidyadhara, Asura or Deva, or even by Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva. Then, remembering that I was endowed with all powers, I contemplated on the five sense perceptions and soon became identified with them. Then I found that I was seen or sensed by everyone. But everyone thought of me differently. Men considered me as Vasishtha with a gross body, aquatic animals considered me as Vasishtha related to water and by the world of Sun and Moon as being related to Tejas. That is, according to each one's experience and ideas, I was considered as one with a gross body or with a subtle body.

Truly I was in a state akin to that of Brahma. Both subtle and gross perceptions are no more than empty

phenomena in an empty background. As the percept of grossness had been repeatedly ruminated upon during millions of years, experience of grossness was the result, which mankind has inherited from its predecessors. In any case, percepts take the form of the individuals' ideas and mental make up. But if such preconceived ideas be given up by acquiring true knowledge, every one will realise his true nature or identity with Brahman. Just as a youngster imagines a ghost, men experience the gross world. The phenomena seen in dreams are recognised to be false on waking up; so also will these phenomena, experienced in this state, be realised to be long drawn-out dreams.

When everything is identical with Brahman, how can these mere appearances be considered to be Real? This will become clear only when wisdom dawns. If one repeatedly studies this work of Maha-Ramayana, there is no doubt that he will become wise. By mere reading one gets peace of mind and contentment. After all, Moksha or Release is nothing but a state of mind of unruffled calm. It is only the mind that gets ruffled and is and therefore said to be in bondage. If this samsara is experienced after one has become a Jivan-Mukhta, he will find it just a child's play; otherwise life is full of misery.

NIRVANA PRAKARNAM

PART-II SECTION-II

Vasishta: Rama! I narrated to you the world perceptions which was witnessed by me in the immobile rocks. Such creations are mere perceptions and do not actually have any abiding existence at any time. What exists is only Brahman. Just as the city seen in a dream is only a dream perception and not a real city, so also are the objects of our waking perceptions not objects but Brahman appearing as Chith. In dreams the Chith is a witness to various phenomena without itself undergoing any modifications. It does the same in the waking state too from creation till dissolution, without undergoing any change. Just as ornaments made of gold are only gold and as the dream city is just the activity of Chith, so also is creation not different from activity. But all such activities take place in the emptiness of akasa. World phenomenon therefore is neither created nor dissolved. Like the Sun, it shines forth uninterrupted. Birth and death pertain only to the phenomena of gross body. The dissolution of the Chith would mean that, if the father dies, the son too should die, or if one dies, all should die. But this is not our experience. At all times, many people die but all the same the world phenomenon goes on. If one realises that "Self" is Chith, then he will not be bothered by ideas of birth and death. Those who identify the "Self" with body are no better than dead bodies. The nature of Chith is to know or cognise which gives rise

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to activity and change. I am in this state of mind. Instead of adopting this all-embracing view, if one identifies himself with the body, he is like one, searching all over for the gold with him. Strength, intellect and intelligence are desired by everyone. But for those who identify the "Self" with the body, these faculties disappear with death. But for those who identify the "Self" with the Chith these faculties are permanent. The entire world and its contents are all nothing but activity. This body which is constantly undergoing change during its brief span of existence cannot be Chith or pure activity. In the state of Gnana the "Self" is realised as Chith.

The world phenomena, palpable to the senses, are mere percepts which can be truly designated as the dream phenomena of Reality. All these percepts arise in Brahma-akasa and are therefore experienced as Brahman. This is the final conclusion that we can draw. But we hear of so many other schools of thought like Sankhya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Buddha, Vedanta, Jaina and Charvaka and a host of others besides. We subscribe to these faiths also, since our concept embraces all these and does not run counter to them. In whatever way Brahman is conceived, in the same way is Brahman experienced. These various faiths experience Brahman in various manner. But since Brahman is all embracing, all faiths are included in it. What we particularly stress is that, by adopting any one of these faiths, if one continues his enquiries further, truth will dawn on him. But such great souls who have become Jivan-Muktas are so few in this

world at all times. They are Hari, Brahma, Sukra, charya, Prajapathi, the seven great sages, Daksha, Kasyapa, Narada, Kumaran, Sanat Kumara, Hiranya, ksha, Bali, Prahlada, Sambaran, Mayan, Vibhishana, Indrajit and then among men many Brahmins and Kshatriyas are to be seen. They are to be seen among other castes also but they are always very few.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE WISE

Vasishta : For following the path of wisdom association with the wise is considered to be one of the best means. By such association one not only learns the truths quickly but is also enabled to follow in their footsteps and correct his own ways. This path is considered even better than one's personal effort and study of the Shastras, since wise men show by their conduct how life is to be lived. So if one happens to get such association, it should be carefully treasured.

It is easy to recognise wise men by the way they lead their lives. They carry out their works without haste or sluggishness, with a contented mind. Whatever evil or good may befall them, they remain unruffled. They discharge their daily duties with neither zeal nor disgust. They come to a quick decision over any matter. They know not fear, indolence or lassitude. They would not interest themselves in other people's affairs. They would always do good to others and never a thought of even the slightest injury to others would enter their minds.

They cross this ocean of samsara with little effort. They preserve always a calm and composed mind.

Rama : It is true that human beings can attain salvation through effort, study of shastras or association with the wise. What is the fate of plants and animals? How could they attain salvation?

Vasishta : What is common to plants, animals and human beings is "existence" i. e. Chith. Then neither subtle nor gross substances are endowed with the activity known as perception. Plants and animals are however endowed with this faculty and so make efforts to protect themselves. Both in the acuteness of perceptions and in the amount of effort put forward, they are superior to men. Man can never compete with them in the zeal to put forth effort. But they do not have discriminating knowledge. This is possessed by mankind only. It is this faculty that has contributed to the multiplication of the feelings of reaction like happiness and misery. The cause of reacting tendencies is the faculty of imagination, with which man is richly endowed. The other beings do not have this faculty in the least. So the state of Release will apply only to the human species.

Rama : Some believe that "Truth" or "Reality" is that which is cognisable by any one of the five senses. Then, that there is rebirth after death has not been experienced by anybody. So the proper motto in life is to derive as much happiness as possible. How can such people attain salvation?

Vasishta : In that all-embracing and all-pervasive Consciousness, whatever is imagined is subsequently experienced. This is accepted by all shastras. For Chitdakasa is just as all-pervasive as the akasa of our perceptions and nothing can arise out of it except itself. So to conceive of creation and dissolution taking place in it is also unreasonable, since we cannot trace a cause for these results.

Thus, birth and death are mere illusions born of ignorance. What is noticeable in birth as well as death is the activity of Chith. Chith is not destroyed by the destruction of the body. The body is a particular formation which will go on changing, depending upon the activity of the Chith. So it is not right to think that the Jiva remains inactive after death. The activity in life-process is that of the Chith and not that of the body. This truth will be realised by all at some time. It is only after this knowledge is gained that there will be the inclination to strive for Release.

Ordinarily death is a cause of great grief among people, which is of course stupid since, by whatever creed it is looked at, it would appear foolish to grieve over death. The Jiva's function is activity and it has no rest and death is like a swoon. The Jiva deserts the old body in order to take on a new one and so it is a matter for rejoicing and not for grief. Even if, according to the belief of Brahmaspathi there is no re-birth after death, there is no cause for grief since the suffering and pain of a succeeding life is got over. So death should really be a cause for rejoicing.

Rama : How to recognise those who are ripe with wisdom ? How would they lead their lives ?

Vasishta : Intelligent people can recognise them easily but it is difficult for the ignorant. They do not belong to any particular class or sect. They may be kings or paupers; they may be celibates or family men, they may be leading their lives far away from the haunts of men in lonely forests or they may be living in large cities with multifarious activities. He may be a pundit or an ignorant man so far as book knowledge is concerned; he may even be a chandala. He may be one who does his daily duties, prayers etc. regularly and well or he may be one who has forsaken them completely. Status of birth, caste, race, station in life, vocation, scholarship, wealth, none of these is any bar to the attainment of wisdom.

Ordinary people would not see any difference in the way they conduct their lives, since they too discharge the duties that befall them like other people. But there is one special feature about them, which only people with understanding can recognise, viz: that their minds are tranquil amidst all sorts and conditions of life. They do not know sorrow or fear. They would not shrink from doing anything dictated by time, place and circumstances. They do not distinguish between good and bad. They participate in all of life's activities without any mental reaction in themselves singing, and laughing or sympathising with the others. Yet they do not slip from their natural state of calmness at any time. They would not

voluntarily engage themselves in any kind of activity nor shun any that comes unsought. They would appear like actors playing their part in life. At all times, their minds are beyond the pairs of opposites.

The central idea of all the shastras is that Chith is the only Reality. Like the Sun which makes the forms of all things visible by its rays, so also does Chith make all worldly phenomena perceptible. It is these rays from Chith that appear as trees, animals, human beings and so forth according to the nature of their respective activity. Death applies to these forms and not to the illuminating rays. The rays of the Sun are all the time shedding lustre, they never cease to do so. When the rays of Chith are not perceived by one, that is the state of ignorance; when perceived, it amounts to wisdom. But in truth the rays themselves know not of ignorance or wisdom; these apply to the persons to whom their vision of the rays is obstructed or apparent. This differentiation arises from the spoken word. So all of us are Atma. This supreme knowledge can be obtained only by effort and enquiry. After the knowledge is gained it must be practised, as the mere acquisition of knowledge serves no useful purpose. Thought, word and deed must act in unison.

This work will be a useful guide for enquiry. All principles and systems are very clearly and appealingly explained with numerous illustrations. All these have been established by my own enquiry and from my own experience. These truths may have

been explained in other shastras too. But they have not been presented in a manner that would appeal to the reader. This work is different from the others in that it can be easily grasped by all. This will be the fittest aid for your effort to obtain Release. What neither father, mother nor guru can give, may be obtained from this work. Such a work which can impart knowledge to all, has not been produced hitherto nor will it be produced in the future either.

I undertook this task out of compassion for you all, who have entangled yourselves in rank ignorance and know not the way to escape from it and seek salvation; perhaps the inducement to this undertaking is due to your own deeds in the past. I am also a man like the rest of you and not a Deva nor a Yaksha nor a Rakshasa. Wisdom was attained by me by enquiry. If you do likewise with persistent effort, there can be no doubt that you will also reach this state.

The ideas that arise in our minds are due to vasanas and imaginative activity. This truth will be realised by enquiry. These ideas as well as the perceptions of the world-phenomena are related as cause and effect. The Atma is not subject to this relationship and it is beyond the six senses. So it cannot be the cause of the things of the world, nor can we say that the senses are their cause, as this would amount to saying that the shadow is created out of light. Then we cannot even maintain that things are comprised of atoms, since in such a case, this place we are in just now, other places elsewhere

should all be either hills or dales as they like. On the other hand, all these things have a definite form, quality and so forth calling for prior planning. Such efforts cannot be attributed to the atoms, which are totally unintelligent. To think of a creator is also equally absurd, since we cannot think of the creator being engaged in such eternal physical activity. It is thus absolutely impossible to find any cause for the grossness and form of things. So they are non-existent. It is our perceptions that create the illusion of objects. Such perceptions arise however only in the Atman, or in other words, it is the Atman that is perceived as world phenomena. It is the Atman that appears as the world of objects when perception arises and as Atman when there is no perception. The world then cannot be looked upon as different from Atman. Then what is the nature of the Atma? This Atma is exceedingly subtle and is like that which connects the mind with a remote object, when the latter is thought about. What arises in this emptiness of Atma should also be empty of content or sunyam. This Atma presents a two-fold view like water and its fluidity, or air and its motion. It would be appropriate to say that this world of void arises from the void of Chith. These illusory appearances which arose as dreams at first have taken root in us as realities. The first dream is called Brahma by us and we are his dream objects, amounting to a dream within a dream. This is the final result of all enquiry. The tanmatra or principle inhering in sabda or the spoken word is called akasa. The tanmatra of touch or contact is motion. The combination of the two is tejas or illumina-

tion. When illumination or tejas subsides it becomes fluid (i.e a state of uncertainty). The combination of all the four tanmatras gives rise to solidity (i.e certainty) of substances. Thus the world of objects is formed out of the subtle tanmatras. How then can grossness be attributed to the objects of the world? So, substance and weight are mere illusions. This applies to our bodies too. Thus the conclusion arrived at by considering the world in relation to the tanmatras is the same as what was said before, viz: that grossness of objects is mere illusion. There is really no difference between the objects of dreams and the phenomena that take place in our waking state.

The world phenomena are mere ideas arising in Chith out of imaginative activity. Ideas are not different from Chith and they were perceived as in a dream. This dream persists subsequently in the waking state also. Truly there is no difference in the phenomena arising in the two states. What we treat as waking perceptions are also mere dreams. When a person has certain experiences in his dreams, those who sleep by his side do not undergo the same experiences. The world of our waking experiences appears like a dream when wisdom dawns. That experience is not then shared by others. When the dream state terminates, we say we have the waking state. Only then do we become aware of the dream. When we go to sleep again these waking experiences are belied and we have other experiences. When death overtakes us, all the experiences of a life-time

are belied and the experiences of the next life-period are again entirely different. In reality both the waking and dream experiences arise out of the activity of Chith. Both sets of phenomena are illumined only by Chith; but in one the senses are associated with the phenomena, whereas in the other they are not. They are like twin children, one being the reflection of the other. They are differently named for the purposes of interchange of ideas. Just as there is no difference in the water that is stored in two different vessels, so is it between these two states also.

Rama : I request you to explain to me in detail the nature of Chidakasa.

Vasishta : When you think of a far-off object, the mind reaches the object quicker than the winking of the eye. What intervenes is said to be Chidakasa. The trees and plants draw up water from the soil by some kind of urge. That is the nature of Chith. When all desires and mental modifications subside, the mind is then in a perfectly tranquil state. Chith is akin to that state. Just before sleep the mind becomes perfectly tranquil, having discarded everything. Chith is akin to that state. Trees and plants grow day by day. The principle by which such growth takes place shows the nature of Chith. That source from which perceiver, perception and the perceived arise is known as Chidakasa. That which shines as the All and in which everything subsides is known as Chith. That which pervades everything, everywhere and at all times is known as

Chith. The state of perfect quiescence which intervenes between one thought and another is the nature of Chith. That which remains after negating everything is Chith.

Rama : Ignorance arises by being engrossed in objects and ideas. I realise that these arise in Chith like dream phenomena and are illusory in nature. But when will this ignorance be got rid of, in what time and by what means ?

THE STORY OF VIPASCHITH

Vasishta : Let me narrate a story in illustration and explanation of these questions.

In a corner of the vast expanse of Chidakasa, there was a different universe from ours but fashioned in the same manner and peopled with men having similar work as in ours. A part of that world was being ruled by a king named Vipaschith. The land under his sway was vast, surrounded on all sides by seas and its capital city went by the name of Thathamithi. The king was of a very benevolent type and ruled his subjects wisely and well. The four quarters of his kingdom were guarded by his subordinate kings who were all well equipped with large armies for the purpose.

As the king grew old, not only did he lose control over the bodily organs, but also over his vassal kings, who thought it to be the fittest opportunity to aggrandise power to themselves. So they began fighting

with one another. The vassal king of the northern region led an expedition to the eastern region, fought with the king, killed him in battle and annexed that area. On seeing this, the king of the southern region marched his troops to the east, fought the victorious king in battle and after killing him annexed those territories to his own. Lastly, the king of the western regions, not to be idle, led a vast army against the latest victor and engaged him in a pitched battle and won it. He thus made himself the sole monarch of the whole land. But he did not enjoy this state even for a short time for, the troops joined together put him to death and marched against the capital city.

The king and his ministers received all this information one by one through the state spies. When it came to the point of rebellious troops marching against the capital, the king took counsel of his ministers and warriors. The ministers after deep deliberation came to the conclusion that the time was past for having recourse to any one of the other three out of four well known maxims on strategy of treating the an enemy. Neither peaceful negotiation nor creating discord in the enemy's ranks nor bribery could be adopted at the then state of affairs. The last one of fighting the enemy could alone be resorted to. The king accepted the advice, collected a large army and placing them at the command of his ministers and generals asked them to go ahead and fight the opposing armies, telling them at the same time that he would join them soon. Vipaschith, the king, leaving the audience chamber went straight to the place of

worship and there offered puja to the family deity Agni. After the puja was over, he fell in a reverie and reflected over the past during which he had done mighty deeds, conquering all the four quarters of lands, making himself the sole monarch, appointing vassal kings to look after these quarters and establishing a benevolent rule over his vast empire. His fame would have been enshrined in the hearts of his subjects, he thought. He could not now reconcile himself to the idea of such fame being tarnished in his last days. Making the Deity a witness to these grievances he implored Him to intercede on his behalf and create in his place four unconquerable warriors like Lord Vishnu Himself, so that they could vanquish his foes. In order to get this boon, Vipaschith offered his own life in sacrifice by cutting off his head.

In a few minutes there arose in that very spot four invincible heroes like Lord Devendra himself, armed to the teeth and ready for fight. These four beings were all absolutely alike, as if they were one mind and four bodies. Not wasting a moment, these warriors set out in the direction of the fight.

During all this time, Vipaschith's forces were fighting their foes as best as they could. But the opposing army was very large and so the former forces were on the point of giving up the fight and fleeing. Just at that psychological moment the four warriors rushed into the battle and fought as became their valour and dealt death and destruction to the enemy forces. Who could resist the might of heroes

possessed of divine strength and valour? The opposing forces, realising that they could no longer stand the fury of the terrible onslaught, fled in all directions. The four Vipaschiths followed these fleeing forces, each one taking a different direction and slaughtered them to the last man. In the meanwhile they had left their armies far behind and every one of the four had come to the end of one of the four quarters of the kingdom. They could not proceed further on account of the seas that formed the boundaries of the kingdom. The duty assigned to them had been accomplished. Not knowing what to do next, they prayed to God Agni. The God appeared to them and told them that they might ask for whatever boon they wanted. The boon that they sought was to experience everything perceptible to the senses and also to see with the mind what was beyond the senses. The God gave the boon implored of Him and disappeared.

These four Vipaschiths, who wanted to explore the field of ignorance, to the limit had their wishes completely fulfilled. For they passed through several countries, undergoing all sorts of trials and tribulations, continued their travels, undergoing further trials seeing no end to their quest, till finally they succumbed to death. But even death was no relief, since effort could not cease until their ardent desire, to explore up to the limit of ignorance, was satisfied. Ignorance has however no limit nor has wisdom and so these four Vipaschiths were caught up in an endless series of births and deaths. Many yugas were thus spent in useless efforts, till at last some

wisdom dawned on them and as a result they gave up the attempt of seeing the limit of ignorance and turned to the path of wisdom. In this attempt they spent some time.

Although these four Vipaschiths were of one mind with four different bodies, they gradually became more and more different from one another on account of their different experiences in different environments and conditions. In truth it is always one and the same thing that appears differently according to time, place and circumstances. All living entities are endowed with a common Chith that undergoes no change itself but enables changes to arise, with it as basis, and to be noticed. But all such objects of perception are subject to destruction and so it is that they are considered as illusory phenomena. How else can we consider the phenomena which are impermanent? But all phenomena, whether in manifested condition or in dissolution have "existence" as the basic factor. Thus the entire world phenomena can only be considered as arising in this "Pure Existence". This accounts for one Chith differentiating itself as four Vipas-Chiths. After one initial change, successive changes follow, accentuating the differences further and further. All the same, these four Vipas-Chiths helped one another, owing to their original kinship, in their march through the life-cycles.

Rama : How is it that these Vipas-Chiths had to undergo many life-cycles, although they were highly intelligent beings?

Vasishtha : But they were not knowers of Atma. They were no doubt accomplished beings, with gifts and honours to their credit but that was all. They were oscillating between rank ignorance and wisdom and so did not know how to escape from these recurring births and deaths.

The way in which duties are carried out, by the knowers of Atma, is entirely different. Since they discard all desires of the body and since their mind is also completely destroyed, whatever is done by them will not amount to actions, since their mind is not in them and so it is uncontaminated and vasanas do not accumulate. Bondage and Release are mere states of mind and have nothing to do with the body. When the mind has been quietened down completely, it is untouched by anything. The Jivan-Mukhtas do not find any distinctions in the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, sin and goodness and birth and death. When imagination is not at play and when there is no mental reaction, how can ideas arise? Such Mukhtas indulge only in such activity as is dictated by natural needs and such as comes unsought.

For instance, the Sun and Moon, the preceptors of the Devas and Asuras viz: Brahaspati and Sukracharya are continuously discharging their duties shedding life-giving properties irrespective of whether good or bad people enjoy the benefits, or whether they are human beings or animals or plants. They were Jivan-Mukhtas. Janaka, although burdened with the cares

of kingship was a Mukhta. Nalan, Mandhatta, Sagaram, Dilipan, Nakushan were also Jivan-Mukhtas, who ruled vast kingdoms in that state. Bali, Prahlada, Namuchi, Vriddanthran and Mura were also Jivan-Mukhtas who had risen above the pairs of opposites. In their Chidakasa which is pure Intelligence, how could anything different from it appear. The rainbow, although nothing by itself, appears to be real by the rays of the Sun showing diverse colours. In like manner, this world phenomena appears in the akasa of Knowledge. In reality, it is also Sunyam. The truth is that Brahma-akasa appears as World-akasa.

Rama : Lord ! How is this spherical earth held in its place ? What are these boundary areas, known as Lokaloka Mountains ? Kindly enlighten me on these.

Vasishtha : In the same manner that a child, from whom the ball in its hand is snatched away, forms a mental image of the ball, so also did this youthful Chith imagine this spherical earth in the vast emptiness of akasa. Just as a man with a defective vision sees his surroundings beclouded, so also was this solid looking earth seen as an appearance in Chith. Just as the things of our fancies appear and disappear, so also does this earth present itself as an appearance and then disappears. This Chith, whenever it imagines anything at first in any particular manner, cognises it in the same manner thereafterwards. Thus this world which was spontaneously imagined in the beginning, in the manner that we see, now is perceived by us in the same way. If the world had been at first imagined

differently then we would be experiencing the world in that manner. However it be, the fact is that this Earth, the Sun and Moon as well as the stars are just mere perceptions of ours. But these perceptions are subtle in nature or akasic.

This truth has not been told by me to anybody and has been mentioned only to you. Moreover it is my personal experience and not an inference from analogies or an experience of the gross senses. It is an experience in the state of pure Knowledge. We can also discuss about other kinds of world phenomena but the wise do not waste their time in such idle fancies.

Now to consider about how the earth is in its place, it is like a ball suspended in the midst of the ten directions and floating in space. The northernmost portion of this earth is known as Meru and southernmost portion is known as Lokaloka. This earth is like a Kalpa-tree bestowing many kinds of gifts and pleasures. This earth is surrounded by water and beyond it is the region of light and surrounding the light region the region of pure activity or motion and beyond it the region of still and spotless Akasa. In this last region there is neither activity nor inactivity. It is a region of perfect repose.

This earth is located in the centre of the universe. Moreover it is endowed with the power of attracting to itself objects near to it. All that it contains are of gross nature.

Now to go back to our Vipaschiths, one of these four attained some amount of wisdom and thereafter he uplifted himself step by step and finally attained Release. Another took many births and is now a deer. The other two are still in the stage of exploring the field of ignorance to its limit.

We must note another point in regard to the one Chith sub-dividing itself into four and every one undergoing different experiences. The experience of the Chith, caught in the wheel of samsara, will depend on its vasanas and time, place and circumstances. If the vasanas are stronger, the experiences follow the path set by them. If the other set of factors are stronger, then the vasanas are overcome, so to say, and the experiences will be determined by time, place and circumstances.

The reason for these Vipaschiths going through endless births and deaths is that there is no limit to the extent of Ignorance. If everything is Brahman, then Ignorance too is Brahman and so there is no limit to Ignorance either. So these rounds of births and deaths, following each individual's ideas and faiths, would come to a termination only if the path of wisdom be followed.

Rama : Where is that Vipaschith who is a deer now ?

Vasishta : This deer must be in your palace, for it is the one given to you by Thirigartha for sport.

Valmiki: When Vasishtha mentioned this fact, everyone in the assembly was surprised. Rama immediately sent for the deer. When it was brought before the assembly everyone was taken in by the beauty of the animal and gazed at it in rapt attention. After a few minutes, Rama turned towards Vasishtha, with a look of great compassion for the animal, and asked him if there was no redemption for it. He was grieved to see the present pitiable state of what had once been a mighty and invincible hero. Vasishtha replied that the Vipas-Chith was a creation of the god Agni and if the same god be implored, then there will be redemption for it. As that time had approached, he said, he would arrange for it. Immediately he sat in contemplation. In a few minutes, there appeared in the midst of the assembly a blaze of light. The deer was intently watching it and then slowly approaching it. Vasishtha exhorted the animal to plunge into it and obediently it took a plunge. Immediately the deer disappeared and in its place there stood the form of a human being with a most intelligent face and handsome appearance. He was none other than Vipaschith and he immediately made his obeisances to the assembly. Then he approached Vasishtha and after making his obeisances, thanked him for having obtained his deliverance. Vasishtha blessed him and after that Vipaschith bowed to King Dasaratha and the other Maharishis.

Dasaratha: Oh, Vipaschith! You had had to undergo many trials and tribulations owing to avipaschith (ignorance).

Valmiki: On hearing this, Visvamisra began to speak.

Visvamisra: In truth almost all men have to pass through many many births. Until wisdom dawns, everyone has to wallow in ignorance during thousands of centuries without knowing the way to escape from it.

This earth floats in empty space and is itself empty of any content, being purely akasic in nature. It is akin to things imagined by a young lad. The earth, situated in the centre of the vast space is a kind of support to the things situated round about it in all the ten directions. The Sun, Moon and stars too, situated at enormously great distances, hold on to one another and move round constantly. Since it is spherically shaped like a ball any part of it has ten directions depending on the locality; and people in each area have their own directions like up, down and so forth. This vast universe is then just an imaginative thought in Brahman. This little act of imagination in Brahman is the cause of our unlimited ignorance. The reason for this universe appearing spherical is that our ideas are all of a recurring nature. An ant moving on a ball would be constantly moving round and round. Our ideas too are of this nature. Unless the ant moves out of the ball, it cannot go to a different region. The same principle holds regarding our ideas too. Then the acts of creation and dissolution of this universe also arise only in imagination. The imaginative thought of Brahman must also be Brahman. So this universe is not different from Brahman. When

this truth is realised by us, the universe dissolves. If it is not realised, then we seem to perceive creation.

Valmiki: After mentioning these truths to the assembly, Viswamitra asked Vipaschith to tell the assembly about his experiences. In obedience to this request, he narrated briefly the experiences of thousands of his previous lives. In the last one of these, he said, he had a strange experience about which he narrated in detail.

VIPASCHITH'S EXPERIENCE

Vipaschith: In my attempt to explore the Universe, I was flying through space, when suddenly I saw a mighty form tumbling down the skies. Fearing that I might get crushed, I flew far away from its path and watched what was happening. The form fell on the earth with an ear-splitting noise and not only completely covered it but extended beyond it too. So huge was its form, I wondered if the earth with its population was going to be completely annihilated preparing the way for a fresh creation. As I was eager to know what this being was, I prayed to my favourite god Agni who immediately appeared before me. I then bowed to Him and put him my question.

Agni: In the all-pervading Intelligence, there arises spontaneously the phenomenal appearance known as perception. This is purely of the nature of Intelligence or illumination. The rays of this illumination expand as imaginative play, similar in nature to

dream phenomena. This takes place when it combines with activity. This Intelligence creates, imaginatively, the five senses step by step and experiences them. When these experiences become its second nature, so to say, it creates the necessary organs of manifestation also in its imagination and through them experiences the outer world. The subtle and gross states are related as cause and effect in the same manner as the dream state and its phenomena.

It is this being, called Asura, who originated as stated above, whom you saw. This Asura, having destroyed the hermitage of a Rishi out of an excess of egoism, was cursed by the latter to become a mosquito, as the Asura's egoism was born of his mighty form. It was the dead body of the Asura which you saw. He died with the thought of the mosquito uppermost in his mind.

The cognitive faculty which left the body of the Asura was in mid-space without a support. This then mingled with the five sense perceptions and, under the influence of the vasanas in the shape of the thought of the mosquito, took on that body and was borne as a mosquito just like a seed which, as soon as it is planted, gathers to itself water, air and other substances and in course of time grows into the corresponding tree.

Valmiki: When Vipaschith had narrated so far, Rama interrupted the talk and asked Vasishta whether creatures having physical bodies are born only out of the womb or by other means also.

Vasishtha : From the tiniest creature up to Brahma, every creature undergoes two transformations. The first is the state of Brahma or imaginative ideas. These are common to all creatures. The second state arises out of the extent of the ignorance of each creature arising out of perceptions. This kind of birth can take place only through the womb.

Vipaschith : (Agni's discourse)

To follow up the fate of the mosquito, its life is of two days' duration. During the first day it grew to vigorous youth, roamed amidst grass, shrubs, and faith and then finding a mate enjoyed to its heart content. Then, when it rested on the tip of a grass it was accidentally crushed beneath the hoof of a deer. Before it died the mosquito was thinking only of the impending death from the deer and so it was born as a deer. The deer was freely roaming in the forest when one day it was pursued by a hunter and shot by him and it died with its mind filled with the thoughts of the hunter. This deer was then born as a hunter. The hunter set out one day for hunting and on his way he came across the hermitage of a Rishi. The Rishi called the hunter to him and gave him some advice.

Rishi : What is the high purpose of living by killing animals? Life is thereby spent in vain and it is good neither for this life, nor for the next. One's life-time passes away quickly and so you must make efforts during this short period to obtain Release from the recurring births and deaths by annihilating the mind.

Hunter : If the mind subsides completely, then how can any kind of work be carried on? This is feasible only if the mind be at least feebly active.

Rishi : You had better sit down here. Throw out all thoughts and be a Mouni.

Agni : In obedience to the Rishi's words, he sat down and heard the discourses of the Rishi. In a few days, he learnt the gist of the Shastras and seemed to have been profited greatly by it. One day he asked the Rishi how the phenomena perceived externally are also perceived internally as dreams.

Rishi : I will tell you how I attempted to investigate this matter and learned the truth about them. When I had well advanced in the path of wisdom, I seated myself one day in padmasana pose and controlled the mind so as to be absolutely free from any kind of thought. In that state I wanted to enter into the mind of another person and accordingly entered his mind through his nostrils and then vibrating in tune with his prana entered the region of his brain. Then, keeping my mind steady I entered into his to know its contents. There I saw all the things of the external world. The latter was fully reflected inside, all crowded within a small space, like jewels stored in a mud pot. Then, from there I examined the contents of the whole body. The body was full of flesh, blood, nerves, bile phlegm and air. One side was hot and the other cold; then there were rushing waters, sounds of wind and so forth, making it all a little world by itself. I saw also mountains, rushing

torrents, gales and earthquakes that we witness in the external world. All was in complete darkness and I wondered if this were Hell.

While still there, I reflected and realised that it was the internal activity that was the cause of illusory phenomena and it was these same phenomena that were experienced as external perceptions. We call the external phenomena as waking perceptions and the internal ones as dream perceptions but both are due to the activity of Chith. How then can we talk of them differently? The same is true of birth and death which are not different in relation to Chith. Although the physical bodies may be perishing again and again, the activity of the Chith never ceases. This activity is going on all the time either internally or externally. The Chith, which is one but manifesting activity internally and externally, is differently conceived by us.

Then I wanted to ascertain what the state of sleep was like. Just then the mental activity of the person under examination was gradually subsiding. The entire body relaxed and he went into slumber. What I then saw was the complete inactivity of his Chith, both internally and externally. I realised it as sleep but the same condition arises even in the waking state. So the waking state is also similar to the deep sleep state, i. e. when the Chith is completely in repose. In the state of deep sleep, the jiva appears to be released and in its natural state of repose. If these three states are carefully examined, we find that the all-pervading jiva manifests itself both as

activity and repose. In the state of repose, it is all-pervasive and non-dual and in the active state it takes a multifarious-form. And it is in this active state that all the multitudes of differences arise.

Then I wanted to ascertain what the turiya state was and so entered inside. There I could see neither activity nor any phenomena. It was in a state of illumination or in a state of readiness to know or perceive but not actually knowing or perceiving. This state is beyond the three states of waking, dream and sleep, or all the three states fused into one. In relation to this state, creation and dissolution become meaningless terms.

Then, seating myself firm in my consciousness, I mingled in his consciousness. Both were identical in all respects and were like two suns shedding their rays. When I followed these rays to peep into the outside world, I saw two worlds with two sets of mountains, rivers, two suns, two moons and so forth. Like a drop of oil spreading over the whole surface of water in a rice, the two samviths permeated all the three worlds, the moment they had the outgoing tendency. But as soon as the outgoing tendency was checked and the idea of two samviths also given up, the two samviths fused into one like milk and water, or like smoke disappearing amidst the clouds. The world of perceptions was then only one, not two. I realised then that wrong vision gives the appearance of two worlds and right vision only one. Samvith can be only one; it is not possible that every one can

have a different samvith. The truth is that in the common and sole samvith, many ideas and perceptions arise and give rise to multiplicity of phenomenal appearances.

After these experiences, that person went to his usual sleep. One by one the external perceptions ceased and the mind gradually withdrew and subsided like the neck withdrawn within the shell of the tortoise. The nerves quietened down, the senses subsided and the mind stood still. I too rested a while.

Rama: While the mind is of the nature of akasa, how can we then say that it becomes active in conjunction with prana.

Vasishta: Body and mind do not of course have a real existence. Still, if they are perceived then they exist as Brahman and not as an object or idea. The spontaneous activity that takes place in Brahman cannot be anything but itself, although it seems to us to be different. When imagination is at play and ideas arise, then we see the various phenomenal appearances and when imagination subsides then Brahman alone remains as substratum.

The imaginative activity that arises in Brahman is variously conceived by us as either Reality or unreal or real-unreal. As we imagine, so do we experience. Imaginative activity is prana. The nature of prana is to induce imaginative activity. Prana is otherwise known as Jiva. Prana can manifest itself only as Manas. Prana and Manas are inter-dependent and have the same relationship as the charioteer and the chariot; if one of them subsides, then the other one also subsides.

For them to subside, imaginative activity must cease and for this to be achieved wisdom must be gained. Wisdom can be gained only if there is an ardent effort for Release accompanied by enquiry. The state of sleep mentioned above is spoken with reference to the state of Prana and Manas and the accompanying condition of the nervous system. When mind is inactive the nerves also pulsate gently. The same thing happens when food is taken in. It is in these conditions sleep prevails.

(Agni Continued)

Rishi: A little while later, the nerves began to pulsate slowly and the man woke up slowly from his sleep. Since I was one with him for the time being, my nerves also tingled in unison with his. Since the body was full of flesh, blood, air etc. the nerves which supported their activity also induced the mind's activity on similar lines. These activities gave rise to perceptions such as mountains, rivers, wind etc. outside as a reflection of what was contained in the body itself. The violent forces of nature such as earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, were also observable inside. Then I saw a mighty torrent which was sweeping before it towns, villages as well as forests. Nothing could escape the fury of that torrent. Even devas and asuras could not escape it.

Suddenly I recollected my distinct "self" and that I was a tapasvin in samadhi state. I also realised that all that I perceived was another person's dream state. His mental illusions which had accumulated in him during many lives were being experienced by him.

Hunter : While you are such a wise man and a tapasvin, why should you have tried to experience these illusions. Why could you not have attained peace in contemplation ?

Rishi : It is usual for such unusual experiences to arise before dissolution sets in. Such dissolution may take place through any one of the primary elements, viz: motion, fluidity etc. My experience was as indicated above. Further, our experiences take place according to circumstances i. e. in accordance with the lurking vasanas. Then again, however wise a man may be, when body, mind etc. deteriorate with advancing age, then everything happens in an incongruous manner. But you must bear one fact in mind, that all that was seen by me was only dream phenomena. So how can they affect us in any manner.

Hunter : Then what is the purpose of expatiating so much on such illusory phenomena ?

Rishi : It has a purpose behind it. Unless you know that these world phenomena are illusory, how can wisdom dawn ? Now to continue with my further experiences, as I was caught up in that mighty water torrent, I was tossed about here and there until finally I was hurled on to a rock at the foot of a hill, where I felt myself safe. Then in a short while all that torrent disappeared and the cities, villages and mountains etc. reappeared.

At that time I fell in a reverie and looked back on my past. I had been a poor brahmin in some village performing the prescribed rites and duties very

assiduously but not advancing in wisdom. A hundred years had been spent by me in this manner. One day a tapasvin came to my abode as a guest. I played the host in a befitting manner and at night, after we had taken our food and gone to bed, the guest told me about himself. He had wandered over many places and he told me about them all. Finally he wound up by saying that all that we perceive is Chith and it is that which gives us the appearance of world phenomena.

When he went away the next day, after taking leave of me, I thought over what he had said. In continuation of these thoughts, I sat in deep contemplation. It was then that I realised that I had entered the heart of the Cosmic Soul. Then I tried to get out of his being but I could see no limits to his extent, however far I roamed. Then identifying myself with Vayu (the principle of motion) I went very far and having taken hold of prana I came out of that Being. As soon as I came out I saw my body before me. Many of my disciples had been sitting around me, awaiting my return to consciousness. I felt that I had been in their midst only for a short while.

After remaining in my physical body for some time, I re-entered the heart of the Cosmic Being and reached his nerve centre. The sight I saw there was most surprising. For, what I saw then was only a blaze of illumination everywhere. Trees and plants, cities and forests, were all swamped by this blazing light. Then I realised that I was witnessing another

Being's experience and as soon as this realization came on me, my mind attained tranquillity.

Hunter : How are one's doubts dispelled as soon as one realises that one's vision was all a dream? Then when you entered another person's mind, how did you find out that all that you had witnessed was merely dreams? Then how was it possible to witness this entire universe and its dissolution in the infinite space within the mind?

Rishi : While creation itself never took place anytime in the past, how can we talk about it now? The word "Creation", both by sound and significance, can point only to Brahman and nothing else. Owing to our ignorance, we perceive Brahman as world phenomena but when wisdom dawns the world phenomena will be realised to be Brahman. Both Knowledge and Ignorance are indeed Brahman and so, as a result of this, creation is also Brahman, that is Brahman gives rise to the perception of creative phenomena. Such phenomena cannot but be Brahman; so is it also with body, mind etc. The only Reality is Chith and the activity within it is perceived by us as world phenomena.

If the persons of our dreams undergo pleasure and pains, is there any cause for those feelings? Just like whirlpools appearing on the surface of waters, so also are certain spontaneous activities going on in Chith. Although a second is a very short duration of time, it may appear to lengthen itself into many centuries. The little seed grows into a mighty tree. In all these examples, it is the basic things that

give the appearances of various phenomena. In like manner the Chith which is the basis of all world phenomena gives rise to multitudes of phenomenal appearances. It is the Chith that gives the appearance of wakefulness in dreams and dreaming in the waking state.

Hunter : Who are those that are affected by actions done in previous lives and who are not? How do those, who have no trace of past actions, conduct themselves?

Rishi : At the beginning of creation, owing to the spontaneous activity that takes place in Brahman, many types of jivas appear simultaneously. In this state they all have an existence only in the subtle state and there is no action done and so no result is to be expected. There is also no sense of differentiation in that state. There is no imaginative activity and so the jivas are not different from Brahman. Then, later on, many of these jivas begin to imagine that they are different from what they really are, i. e. they undergo the first imaginative act or perception as "Self". It is this perception that is the cause of the subsequent manifestation of phenomenal appearances. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the prime Purushas had remained untouched by this perception and so did not embroil themselves in manifested existence. Other jivas, on the other hand, possessed as they were with ideas of "self" and perception, were accordingly caught in the cycles of birth and death. These jivas have continued to maintain the same sort of existence which had been imagined in the beginning. In any case, all jivas had

originally been in a state of complete freedom. Subsequently they, of their own free-will without any external pressure, lost the freedom and created for themselves certain modes of existence and continued in that state interspersed by recurring births and deaths. These original ideas which have continued to sway the various jivas till today are spoken of as Natural laws. Thus, this Nature too is a system of ideas only.

Existence and Release, Knowledge and Ignorance, Perception and non-Perception are all variants of Imagination and non-Imagination or Repose. Imagination is the phenomenal appearance of existence, while Repose is the state of Release. Both states were originally pure appearances, how then can they be considered real now? The jivas manifest themselves of their own accord and finally release themselves too of their own accord. Water, being possessed of the property of flow, is enabled to appear as a whirl or a flow. In the same way, Brahman is possessed of infinite power and so appears as multifarious jivas. It is the rays of illumination proceeding from Brahman that give us the appearance of world phenomena. They are neither waking nor dream perceptions but pure rays of illumination. Can one rightly call them as either objects or world phenomena or activity or by any other name? All these are unreal i. e. they are mere appearances and no more than every one's perceptions. In relation to these appearances activity takes place but they are empty phenomena and it would be inappropriate to speak of any cause or doer for them.

To conclude, activity arises from ignorance and if ignorance is dispelled, both activity and life-process subside. This ignorance can be rooted out only by study; then wisdom dawns. By study, all fears are dispelled and the cycle of births and deaths comes to an end. Such study must be pursued with untiring efforts.

The result of discharging dharma and karma is to bring about happiness or misery and conditions of Release or bondage. Hence one should arrive at right conclusions about them. Such conclusions can be arrived at only by the learned i. e. Pundits. For, they alone know the truth about objects of perception. That is the reason why learning is extolled. Even the overlordship of the three worlds will not equal the status of one who is deeply learned. Just as the fear of the illusory snake is dispelled the moment it is found to be a rope, in like manner would ignorance vanish and tranquility of mind be attained, as soon as wisdom dawns.

The truth about world phenomena is that they are also Brahman rooted in Brahman. Creation, dharma, karma or the innumerable things signified by the multitude of objects, not any one of them is distinct from Brahman at any time. For, there is nothing of the same species in Brahman to create any one of them. We can therefore designate them only as various appearances of Brahman. There is no more truth in the statement that all these objects of perception experienced in the dream-like condition, which we ignorantly call waking state, arise out of their previous

karma or vasanas than that the previous karma is the cause of the person who is an object of our dream. The world of objects, time, space, activity, all these become known by the illumination of Consciousness. These rays of Consciousness pervade everything everywhere like the rays of the sun, without suffering any obstruction by anything. How can one foist any kind of differentiation amidst these rays of Consciousness; such a differentiating sense is the ignorance we suffer from. It is the imaginative activity that makes use of such rays for purposes of perception which then take on multitudes of world forms. So the world phenomena, the jiva, its waking and dream states are all merely such perceptions. Thus in respect of these rays of Consciousness, ideas of cause and result are meaningless. But if these rays are differentiated in our minds, then they require the relationship of cause and effect. The results obtained now have no previous ideas for their cause. But they are really no more different from each other than fire is different from heat or air from motion. The unbroken vastness of emptiness gives the appearance of the blue sky. In the same way does the unceasing activity of Chith give the appearance of world forms.

Hunter: How do pleasure and pain arise in the body? What is the cause for them?

Rishi: The multitudes of words signifying various things all point out to one thing only. What really happens is that the spontaneous activity of Chith is given the appearance of many by the illuminating rays proceeding from it. This gross body is also an imagi-

native product of Chith, so also is death, as well as experiences of the next world. So, the Chith undergoes all these experiences. So long as these perceptions do not subside, activity and birth and death also do not cease. In this manner, crores and crores of beings come into being and disappear endlessly. So, it is perceptions that give rise to these beings. Such perceptions arise in the waking and dream states but they subside in the conditions of sleep and death. Immediately these latter states come to an end perceptions arise again. Death cannot be considered as terminating the association with a physical body, for if a man dies several thousand miles away from his home, he takes his birth again in his own country, impelled by vasanas. This has been established by experience. When perceptions arise in the waking and dream states, we consider them as world phenomena. In the state of death perceptions subside and we consider it then as a state of dissolution of the world phenomena with respect to the deceased person. Thus the state of existence or dissolution of the world is dependent on one's state of perception or otherwise.

Thus perception becomes the root cause of ignorance. Happiness and misery arose in this manner. We have brought them upon ourselves and they are just ideas imagined by ourselves. So, when we cease to imagine these ideas, they too come to an end.

How can one foist all these varied ideas on the untainted rays of illumination, which alone pervade everything, everywhere? These rays are experienced in whatever way we imagine them to be. In this manner, lakhs and lakhs of ideas followed one after another and they assumed stable existences in the shape of earth, water and other worldly forms, although in reality they have no abiding existence. But every such appearance or being is unaware of the existences of others. Each being lives in a world of its own, like the land frog being unaware of the water frog or like hundred people who sleep in a place and dream, without anyone being aware of the others' dreams. So there are innumerable worlds existing simultaneously. It is a trick of the Chith which gives rise to the appearance of world phenomena, while retaining its own unsullied state. Activity is the nature of Chith. It is this activity that is perceived as many, distinct from one another. Activity of Chith is not different from Chith. And so the multitudes of world appearances are not also different from Chith. We cannot even posit a cause-effect relationship between them. All these appearances, the world, you and I, arise in atomic space.

Hunter: How does this activity take place without a cause? If there be a cause then how does it appear as creative activity?

Rishi: The creative activity has no cause. As we are unable even to imagine a cause for it, we identify it with Chith. The rays proceeding from Chith, appear as creative activity, which is just another

mode of expressing the same thing. The activity of Chith cannot be different from Chith itself. Can this activity, that appears as many, endowed with form and substance, be different from Brahman? It is this same activity that appears as innumerable beings, as well as what we call Nature. All ideation or the converse of it, creation, subtle-gross etc, are subordinate to these laws of Nature. But before they established themselves, there was no such thing as cause and effect, so that one could really have squeezed out oil out of sand in that unstabilised condition. What we call Nature is also Brahman that contracted itself into finiteness, without any thought or desire i. e. spontaneously. Nature and its laws sprang out of Brahman in the same way as whirls form in running water. After Nature had evolved itself, everything in this world of perception evolved itself, subject to the relationship of cause and effect. All such creations proceed on the basis of the original spontaneous ideas which subsequently become unalterable and hence are called Nature.

WHAT IS JIVA?

The Jiva or Mind is the activity of Chith which manifests itself internally or externally through the five sense perceptions. We can know about the activity of Chith only by these sense activities. This fivefold-activity whether it takes place internally, or externally is again transmitted to the body through three systems of nerves inside the body and is thereby made apparent. The internal activity is called dream phenomenon and the external activity waking

perception. Both sets of phenomena are pure phenomenal appearances or imaginative ideas arising within the Chith, having atomic dimensions. The vast and immeasurable external world is reflected in the Chith which is as atomic in size in relation to the atom as the atom is to the world and is manifested through the three systems of nerves. Then the two sets of phenomena depend on the condition of the three systems of nerves Sleshma, Pitha and Vatha. If these nervous systems are in a normal state and function properly, then the perceptions are also normal. Even when any one of these nervous systems is in an abnormal condition, then the perceptions are also abnormal. So it is possible to judge about the state of the body and the nervous systems from these perceptual experiences.

Hunter : What other illusions did you see, while you were within the heart of another person ?

Rishi : I told you already of my having witnessed the pralaya of water, air and agni. Then I saw the pralaya of Prithvi also, i. e. solid substances. There was such a tremendous rain of rocks which devastated all cities, towns and villages. All this was witnessed by me while I was in the subtle state. A little while later, I entered the state of sleep along with the other man. Having thus rested awhile in this manner, I woke up from sleep, when wisdom dawned on me. Rooted firmly in that state, I perceived the world of objects within it as being not different from it, like the heat in fire, like fluidity in water, like the pungency in pepper, I saw the world inside Chidakasa. It appeared

as if the world of perceptions was of the nature of Chith.

Hunter : You told me that you were experiencing the state of sleep of another person : you also told me that you got away from it. How can it be possible ? Then, how can one see while in a state of sleep ?

Rishi : The expression "created", to whatsoever thing it may refer, from a pot to the universe, is purely an idea of the mind. Its real significance is only "existence". What is characteristic of everything and is common to all in the universe is this state of existence. Creation and dissolution, as ordinarily understood, do not occur at any time and so they are meaningless. Brahman alone is ever rooted permanently in this state of existence. The universe is also rooted in existence, but as Brahman and not as something different from it. What is common to the three states of waking dream and sleep is the state of "being" and the world does not exist in any of these three states in the manner perceived by us, as it is not its true state.

The world phenomenon that appears in Brahman like a dream is akin to the flowers that blossom on trees and plants, or to the waves on the surface of water, or the limbs that grow out of our body, or the mountains on the surface of the earth. This world contains no more substance in it than a city built out of akasa.

In a pomegranate fruit the seeds are found bunched in groups separated from one another ; the world of various species is also just like it.

While I was in this state, witnessing various illusory phenomena, I suddenly saw my old village, in which I was living and also my relatives and friends. Then my mind took a turn towards these old associations by virtue of the past experiences, which were more powerfully exercising their influence than the new ones. The reason for such a thing happening is that my mind was not fully under control then and also because I had not shed the sense of duality completely. Hence, oh, hunter! until you associate with the wise and succeed in getting rid of the sense of duality, complete tranquility of mind cannot be attained.

Hunter: How is it that this dream-like phenomena of world perceptions appear to be true as well as false?

Rishi: Any spontaneous and firm conviction arising in Consciousness associated with time, space, activity and substance, will necessarily appear as true. This is called a truthful dream. What is achieved through prayers, mantras, drugs or possessions, appear sometimes as truthful dreams and sometimes as false dreams. What appears to be truthful continues to appear so for a long long time, until a fresh conviction, more powerful than the previous one, takes hold of the mind. So it is the Samvith or Consciousness which presents the picture of what was previously imagined. It is this Samvith that has given rise to the multifarious appearances that we see about us. If there be no firm conviction and if one is assailed with doubts, then effort and result are at

variance. Then, what appears to be true may also appear to be the contrary of it under the modifying influences of time, circumstances and personal effort. Thus it is the Samvith that appears as all the objects of the world, as knowledge and ignorance, as waking, dream, sleep and so forth. All these various states and expressions referring to them are equivalent and they all point to one and the same thing.

Hunter: Oh, great soul! What is the most surprising thing of all that you saw while you were in the heart of another being?

Rishi: I shall tell you of a strange experience. In the heart of that being I spent 60 years of my life as a householder. One day a venerable Rishi came to me as a guest. By his very look I could see that he was steeped in tapas and wisdom. Having attended to his needs, we talked about worldly matters. In the course of this talk I put him a question, how it was that many people simultaneously undergo the same experience, such as a great calamity, a famine or death, or even some good, as if they were governed by the same karma?

2nd Rishi: Oh, Brahmin! Look into your own perceptions and feelings, be they true or otherwise, and try to find out the cause. Wherefrom did they come? What is the "Self"? What is the essence of all the worldly experiences? The world of perceptions is nothing but imaginative ideas arising spontaneously in the all-pervading Chith that has no beginning nor end. Whatever is imagined in it boils down to an abiding phenomenal appearance. If a cause is

posited for the experience then that appears to be true. But if no cause is attributed then one does not see a cause in what subsequently happens. We are all beings in the heart of this Cosmic Being i. e. objects of His perception. Happiness and misery for us arise according to His mental state. When His mind is active phenomenal appearances arise. Human beings, being a part of this Cosmic Being, undergo the same experience simultaneously. Happiness and misery is the lot of everyone. Experiences derived by everyone are dependent upon the individual notions and faiths. So, what is happening spontaneously in the Cosmic Being is understood by some as proceeding from it with a cause and by others without it. Chith is truly illumination. How can one possibly trace any form or substance in it or creative activity, or knowledge, ignorance and so on. All these are our own feeble imaginings. What is called Nature is also a state of Chith derived in this manner.

Rishi : From these wise utterances of the great soul, I became wise and freed myself from the ignorance in which I was steeped. I bowed to him in veneration and requested him to stay on with me till my death. He agreed to it readily. That Rishi is the one sitting in front.

Hunter : Oh, great sage ! What is it I hear ! so strange ! How can that being, seen as a dream by you while you were seated in the heart of another person, be here in person before us ? Please explain this in detail and dispel the confusion in my mind.

Rishi : Please listen to what I say without interrupting me, Profited by the wise discourses of the Maharishi, I reflected over my own state. I realised that what I had witnessed till then was another man's dream perceptions. This person too was a dream object. I too was likewise so. No form, no body, an unalloyed false perception. Then I recollected my prior state as a brahmin. From this state, I remembered having let my imagination loose and having entered another person's mind and witnessed various experiences. I then tried to find out this body and find it anywhere. While I was returning from these wanderings, I suddenly came across that person. I was surprised beyond measure. Then I bowed to him, narrated my experiences and requested him to explain to me the significance of these strange experiences.

2nd Rishi : You can yourself understand it by deep reflection. Still, since you have asked me I shall tell you about it. Ideas like "you", "I", etc. are all false appearances. What really exists is the heart of the Purusha known as Hari. We are all dream objects arising out of His heart as his ideas. While you were a brahmin tapasvin, residing in the forest, there was an Agni-Pralaya which burnt up everything.

1st Rishi : What was the cause of that Agni-Pralaya ? How was that forest destroyed ?

2nd Rishi : When imaginative activity is indulged in, world phenomena arise in our perceptions. When the imaginative activity subsides, all these appearances

subside. Imaginative activity is that activity which arises in Chith. We are subject to the experience of the rise and subsidence of this activity. When perceptions subside, we experience the state of repose of Chith. At that time, the state of world phenomena arises in our perceptions. As long as perceptions arise, world phenomena appear to take a firm root.

While you were a brahmin, you attained wisdom and experienced the state of pralaya of world phenomena. Your body also perished and then you were merged in the all-pervading Chith and experienced many dream-like phenomena. You considered that these were dream experiences and those that had occurred earlier as waking experiences. But in truth all are dream-like phenomena taking place in Chith. According to the state of wisdom or ignorance we call them as dream or waking experiences.

Leaving it here, let me tell you now what is going to happen in the future. In a few years there will be a fight between our king and the king of the adjoining country. Both the countries will be ruined by being set fire to by the enemies. All the cities, forests etc. will become a prey to this fire, including our habitation. All people will die and we two alone will survive. While we spend our time elsewhere, this area will bloom again as a delightful forest with gardens, rivers and lakes.

And while we go there again and lead our lives together, you will happen to meet a hunter accidentally. Being good by nature, you will take pity on him and

try to dissuade him from pursuing his profession by discourses. He would also show great respect to you as a guru and listen to your discourses on Reality. You would expatiate largely on dream percepts and you will shine as a guru of the hunter.

1st Rishi : After the Maharishi told me about the future, I made my obeisances to him and then reflected over it deeply. I realised that the objects of perceptions are merely perceptions. These perceptions arise in terms of time and space and they are subtle in their nature having no form or substance. These qualities have arisen in our imagination. Percepts are activities taking place in Chith and must be of the same nature as Chith. And then what is the cause of activities arising in Chith? We are unable to attribute a cause. So even this concept of activity is a delusion. Chith must for ever remain Chith. Then how are we subject to these perceptions? That is due to ignorance. So long as this ignorance lasts, we will be subject to such perceptions. When wisdom dawns they will cease.

With such firm conviction, freed from desire and aversion, not making myself dependent on anything, nor being a subject for others to depend on and indulging only in such activity as came unsought, I was in perfect repose. While I was in this state you came to me. I have discoursed to you at length on world phenomena, perceptions, dream condition and imagination. You may hereafter lead your life as you think best.

Hunter: What I have learnt from your discourses is that the world of perceptions, yourself, myself, are all dream-like phenomena. They are neither real nor unreal.

Rishi: Yes; to everyone all the rest are dream objects. All our experiences take place on the basis of our initial perceptions. Reality is neither in the nor in many nor in between them. What we call waking experiences are mere percepts. This objective world has no more content than those that we may imagine for ourselves. Implant these ideas firmly in your mind and then live as you like. The state of Nirvana is not one of a moment's duration. If it is not experienced as an abiding state, nothing is gained thereby. One will be benefitted only if the path of wisdom be diligently and continuously practised. For such practice, association with the wise and enquiry are necessary. Discarding all ideas as duality and unity and remaining in perfect equanimity is what is known as the Nirvana state of the Chith.

God Agni: After the Rishi had concluded his talk, the hunter was lost in contemplation for a while and remained like a statue. He recalled to himself all that his guru had said. The path of wisdom preached in these discourses ran counter to his own practices comprising worship and other daily observances. So his mind became confused and he struggled for a while to come to some definite conclusion. Like a delicate young woman in the hands of a brutal person, the path of wisdom was wasted on the hunter, for he

arrived at startling conclusions. He thought that ignorance was the cause of all woes and that it manifests itself as perceptions and therefore the proper thing to do was to explore these perceptions to the full and then arrive at the final state. He revealed his mind accordingly to the Rishi. To this the Rishi gave a fitting reply.

Rishi: Like the oblations of ghee made in ashes, these discourses on Gnana have been wasted on you; your mind is assailed with doubts. Let me now tell you about your future. Following the bent of your own convictions, you will spend ten yugas without attaining peace of mind. Engaging yourself in tapas for long periods of years, obtaining boons from the Devas and thereafter taking bodies in accordance with these boons you will set about exploring the perceptual world to its limit. At the end of it you will have attained to a size as big as this earth pervading everything in it. In this state you will begin to reflect on how you came to possess such a vast body, who you really are and then realise what a calamity it is to have such a body. Thoughts such as these alone would be the nett result of all your strivings over many yugas, your tapas and all your boons. Following these thoughts, you will engage yourself in the enquiry of the Atma and finally shed this vast body. This body would drop down dead on the earth ruining everything in it and covering it completely. This body would then be destroyed by Bhairavi. I have now told you about the result of engaging in tapas. You may now proceed to do what you choose.

Hunter : The future predicted by you is fearsome and pitiable. Please let me know how I can escape from such an eventuality.

Rishi : What will happen to everybody in the future depends on upon what has been done up to that moment and upon his faiths and ideas, since nothing outside these can possibly happen. None can stem the tide of events emanating from prior efforts, faith and ideas ; they must perforce happen. Through astrology one may get to know to some extent the trends of the future, but no one can prevent them from happening. The law of sequence is that the results experienced by everyone should arise out of one's own perceptions and reactions.

Hunter : Can you tell me further about my future ?

Rishi : The jiva that had shed the vast body would merge in akasa, so as to be all-pervading and be in a state of restrained activity. Since imagination is its sole function in this state, it would indulge in it and say to itself "I am a King called Sindhu by the people on earth. After the death of my father, I ruled my Kingdom for eight years. But Vidhuratha, the king of the adjoining state, is very valiant and has a large army and so he is a standing menace to me. I must therefore lead an expedition against him." You would thereafter engage him in fight and be victorious. You would be greatly appreciated by your wise and learned minister.

Minister : Your victory though meritorious is very surprising.

Sindhu : Why is my victory so surprising ?

Minister : Because Leela, the wife of Viduratha is the daughter of the goddess Sarasvati and has attained great powers by tapas and other arduous practices. She has obtained many boons and there is nothing which she cannot attain.

Sindhu : Then why did Viduratha die in the fight ?

Minister : Because he did not hanker after victory. His mind was set on obtaining Release, whereas all your efforts were in the direction of winning a victory.

Sindhu : Although I was also a devotee of the same goddess Sarasvati and worshipped her, why did I not get this Release ?

Minister : Everyone is endowed with a Consciousness, which is what is considered as Sarasvati. Whatever one desires and prays for, he gets that only. No one can get anything that he has not thought about and desired. As your sole object was victory in battle, you got it.

Sindhu : Why did not my mind turn towards obtaining Release, although I was a worshipper of Sarasvati ?

Minister : Your prior ideas and acts are the cause of it. All that happens now arise out of the prior way of life

Sindhu: On what prior karmas will my future be based?

Minister: I will now tell you a great secret, please hear me carefully. "You" "I" and all the rest of the world are all Brahman, which has neither a beginning nor an end. In this all-pervading Brahman, there arises living entities by reason of activity. Their subtle state is the true state. The gross body is unreal. The Chith, endowed with imagination, other-worldly ideas etc. dreams of having a form. Like air and the accompanying property of motion, the Chith is associated with world perceptions. Mankind is sub-divided in to various grades according to the extent of bondage to these perceptions; a few are however free from it.

Sindhu: I realise that I am in a very pitiable state. What should I do to elevate myself?

Minister: There is nothing in all these three worlds that cannot be attained by constant manly effort. Just as, when a wicked man turns good, he shines all the better, so you too, whatever may have been your past ideas and efforts, can turn your attention now to uplift yourself. Your future state will depend on what your desires and efforts are now. That is the law of nature."

Rishi: As soon as the king learns these great truths from his minister, he will at once make up his mind to follow the path indicated and, disregarding the protests and advices of all, he would forsake his Kingdom, family and friends and retire

to the forest. There he would obtain association with wise men and engage himself in the enquiry of the "self". Oh! Hunter! I have told you about your future too in full. Now you may do whatever you like."

God Agni: Sometime after this talk with the hunter, the Rishi realised that his life was coming to an end and then he discarded the body without any effort and attained Release. The hunter on the other hand, with mind not ripe for wisdom, indulged in tapas for a long long time at the end of which period Brahma appeared before him and promised to give him whatever boons he sought. As the Rishi had foretold, he wanted to explore the world of perceptions to its limits. Having obtained the boon, he took the form of a Garuda and roamed about the whole world. After spending a long long time in this manner, he realised his foolishness in this vain attempt. Immediately thereafter, his mighty body fell down from the skies and covered the whole earth. The body in course of time perished. The Jiva came back on earth as king Sindhu.

Oh, Vipaschith! I have now told you in full the story of the mighty being which fell on earth, to which you were a witness."

Vipaschith or Basan: So saying, God Agni disappeared. I was in the upper regions in my subtle body and indulged in imaginative activity. I was thinking about the activities to be pursued thereafter. On account of the prior vasanas, the urge to explore sense perceptions to their limit supervened

and so I roamed about various places and various worlds. The sights I saw and the strange experiences I had were innumerable. Thousands of species of creatures were seen by me, without any one of them knowing anything about the others.

During these wanderings, I happened to come across God Indra. He told me that I was to be born in the animal Kingdom next and only thereafter I would obtain Release. Further, he said that he too had to take his birth among the animal species. I was greatly surprised at hearing this. It is not strange if I, steeped in ignorance, were to be born as an animal. But that a similar fate should overtake Indra too was unbelievable. So when I asked Indra about it, He said it was nothing to be surprised at. Just as I had set about exploring the limit of ignorance, He had set about exploring the limit of enjoyment and so the same result was meted out to Him.

After taking leave of Indra, I was born as a deer and while roaming in the forest carefree, I was pursued by a hunter one day and in spite of all my efforts I could not escape him. Oh, Rama ! the hunter presented me to you as a plaything. I learnt from all my experiences that it is impossible to find any limit to ignorance or samsara. To remove ignorance, wisdom alone is the remedy.

Valmiki: After Vipaschith had concluded his talk, Rama got a doubt and so he put him a question.

Rama: You had freed yourself from imaginative activity ; how can that be reconciled with your act of

entering the imagination of another and taking birth as an animal ?

Vipaschith: Reality is one. Inappropriateness, incongruity and all such are tenable only when the sense of duality supervenes. But the sense of duality itself is unreal. And when all are the one Reality, there can be no talk of appropriateness and its opposite. What is there that cannot happen in that ? If Brahman is considered separate from the universe, then no doubt one's imagination cannot mix with that of another. But all are one ; in such a state we can only speak of all imaginative activity as proceeding from one source. Knowledge or Samvith cognises all such imaginative activity as being only mixed up. Were it not so the Atma will no longer be endowed with all-pervasiveness. Only on the basis of the all-embracing nature of Brahman, it is possible to establish what is real and what is unreal, since what is common to everything without exception is alone existence. If on the other hand one subscribes to the idea of creation and dissolution then, after the great Dissolution, there is nothing left from which creation can start, since even the elements must disappear. Only our concept that all are Brahman, explains every phenomenon.

According to this concept, there is neither creation nor dissolution. It is Brahman that is experienced as world phenomena by us. By the motion of air, we feel the presence of air. In like manner the activity known as world phenomena reveals Brahman.

Valmiki: When Vipaschith had concluded his story, the assembly dispersed and everyone, after

taking leave of the others went home to attend to his daily duties. Dasaratha treated Vipaschith as befitting a king and arranged for all his comforts during his stay by assigning him a house to stay and attending to every personal want of his, not excluding womanly company. The next day the assembly met again and everyone taking his seat eagerly met the Maharishi's words in rapt silence.

Vasishta: From the life of Sindhu, it will be clear that ignorance has no limit and to release oneself from it, persistent effort and experience are necessary. One point to be noted is that when one has undergone the experiences of the world of perceptions for a long time, disgust arises for them and then one frees himself completely from any attachment to them. But as his minister, was wise, he did not attempt to explore the field of ignorance. He took himself to the path of gnana and by effort and enquiry attained wisdom quickly. Oh! Vipaschith, you have now reached the state of perfect tranquility of mind. Be steadfast in that state of Jivan-mukhta.

Since ignorance also has its roots in Brahman, it is as extensive and limitless as Knowledge itself and appears equally real. Still, when wisdom dawns it vanishes. By virtue of its source being Brahman itself, it has the faculty of presenting multitudes of appearances.

The cause of ignorance is imaginative activity. Experiences undergone by everyone follow strictly the course of one's imaginative activity. All that are perceptible to the senses are nothing but the gross

form of imaginative ideas i. e. ideas clothed in form and substance. The various species of creatures and the Devas, Vidhydaras etc. are differentiated from one another only by the difference in their respective imaginative activity and ideas. According to their respective desires, ideas and faiths, each particular species is in a certain state of development. But Chith is the foundation of all ideas and is common to all. It lends itself to be variously perceived and named because it is unchanging. If new ideas take a firmer root in our minds than the existing ones, then the new ones manifest themselves to the extinction of the older ones. The experiences of heaven and hell too follow the faiths and beliefs of each individual person.

Rama: Are the experiences undergone by the hunter and the Rishi natural or due to some causes?

Vasishta: In Brahman there are always incessant imaginative activities going on like eddies in water. Like the wind that is blown, depending upon the condition of the air, mental activity takes place according to the movement in Brahman. The phenomenal appearances witnessed by us are dependant upon these movements or activities. Among such phenomena some appear to be permanent and others impermanent. But all are no more than mere appearances. When the body of a person engaged in contemplation dies, then that Jiva continues its activity in the emptiness of akasa. Whatever it imagines in that state is subsequently experienced in the same manner. This activity that takes place in akasa is variously

formed dream and waking state by us. When we wake up from sleep we say that the dream is unreal. When we are freed from ignorance we consider even the waking perceptions as dreams, since these too are impermanent and are mere percepts and do not arise when we do not perceive. The incessant imaginative activity that takes place in the empty akasa without let or hindrance are the ones that are externalised and give rise to percepts at first and subsequently become objects. They cannot therefore be considered as either permanent or real. We consider them real out of our ignorance. But even this state of ignorance is not a permanent state. When wisdom dawns, ignorance vanishes like the mist before sunrise. So even that is unreal. It is also an appearance in the background of the state of Repose. Hence, what is ever permanent is the poise of 'self'.

What we call "the world" is just the meaning or content of the expression "Chith". Imagination, perception and the like mean also the same thing. The world perceptions are no more real than the dream-perceptions.

Oh men! It behoves you all to try to cross this mighty stream of samsara from now on. Life is short out of which a great part is spent in childhood and old age. In old age both mind and body are not under one's control and no efforts are therefore possible then. So make all your efforts before getting enfeebled of body and mind, by a study of the shastras, by association with the wise and by enquiry

If you do not make such efforts now, then a very cruel fate would await you.

The figures of clay of fantastic shapes that one finds near the boundaries of villages are harmless to those that consider them as clay figures, but they inspire fear in those that view them as an assembly of goblins.

Similarly the perceptual world is a source of many evils to the ignorant, but it is a child's play to the wise. What appears real in our ignorant state is experienced as mere dream when steeped in wisdom. So you should control the mind and the senses and attain equanimity of mind.

Rama: How does one get rid of ignorance by conquering the senses? Then how does one control the senses

vasishta: The senses can be controlled only by one's own effort. Before any such effort is made one thing must be firmly implanted in the mind. What we call Purusha is pure Consciousness. Pure activity is what is known as Jiva. The kind of activity that takes place determines the subsequent nature of its being. What we call control of the senses is to get the mind, which may be likened to a rogue elephant, under control by the aid of one's Intelligence. Mind is the leader of the senses and if that is controlled all senses will be under control and this can be achieved only by persistent effort. No other sort of palliative like yagam, yagyam, visiting holy places, prayers and so forth, will be of any use for this purpose. If the mind is forcibly turned aside from running after sense-pleasures every time it does so, then in course of time

results will be seen. With firmness of mind one should discharge one's duties to the family, to his calling and so forth without caring for the fruits. When mind does not react under any circumstances, then it is said to be under control. The wise do not bother about the results, whatever they may do. Moreover they preserve an unperturbed calm under all circumstances. Since they are men who have attained the state of perfect equanimity, they perceive the world as it really is.

If the world-perceptions are rightly understood then one would not be deluded about worldly experiences, as one would not seek water in the mirage after he has learnt what it is. The world phenomenon is rooted in Chith and without any kind of activity of its own. If this is realised, then the talk of bondage and Release is inappropriate. You, me, world are all as empty as akasa and established in chidakasa. They may be considered as shadows of akasa i. e. Sunyam in Sunyam. The illustration of dream phenomena is the most fitting one to explain our waking experiences. Although experienced by us they are not real. What we designate as "self" is neither the enjoyer, nor the enjoyed, nor the activity of enjoyment, but it is Chith itself. Although we dream about our own death, yet it is not real. Although we see the appearance of water in mirage, there is no water in it. In like manner, when wisdom dawns this world phenomena disappear. The spontaneous activity that is taking place in Chith is imagined by us as creative activity. All such activity in Chith cannot

be different from Chith. The activity known as jiva is likewise none other than Chith-activity.

Then, ignorant people divide our existence into three different states as waking, dream and sleep. But wise people treat all the three as one state known as "Turiya". Talk of Unity and Duality is likewise inappropriate. They are no more than jugglery in words.

To lead such a life as depicted, bearing in mind those grand truths, persistent effort is necessary. When one takes stupendous effort and care just to save a stack of hay, how much more effort should one take to attain a state that is equal to the conquest of the three worlds. Even the possession of the three worlds cannot compare in worth to the attainment of supreme peace.

You may all consider that the same truths are again and again repeated. But unless this is done these truths cannot be grasped. In spite of these discourses being extensive and the same truths having been repeated several times, three will be many in this assembly who have not understood them fully. But unless what has been said hitherto be ruminated upon, discussed, discoursed, heard again and again, the gain would be little. If one just reads this once and thinks that he has understood everything, he will derive no benefit at all. One should read this book day after day as one reads the Vedas; then he will shine in wisdom. As this work is the essence of all shastras, it makes it easy for you to learn all the great truths. If one reads the shastras after studying this work,

then one would easily understand all that is contained in them. This work is to the shastras what salt is to the pickle. This task was undertaken by me out of great compassion for you all and to elevate you. I am not benefitted in the least by it. But if this work is discarded out of addition to one's own faith, then there is no salvation for him.

The Jivas are to the Chith what the rays of light are to the Sun. The rays are not different from their source. Then how is it possible for what we call objects to exist? All are Chith and so "you", "me", "world" etc. are false. They did not exist in the past and so they cannot have an existence now. What is experienced by us is therefore Chith and by reason of its dexterity, so to say, it appears as many. It is its very nature to appear so and it will continue to be so at all times. But because of our ignorance, we consider them as different from Chith. But when wisdom dawns this delusion will disappear. I do not experience the distinctions like "you", "me" and so forth. The waking experiences are no more real than the dream experiences.

Although the fancies indulged in during the waking state are as dreamy as dreams, we choose to call them waking experiences. Although in dreams we have as real experiences as in the waking state, we still call them dreams. Dream follows the waking state and the waking state follows the dream. At this very moment what we experience is dream in waking, but when wisdom dawns then the same state is

waking in dream. But in truth both states are alike ; there is no difference between them. Both arise out of the activity of Chith. Just as the wisdom of waking state dispels the notion of reality of dream phenomena, similarly this dream-waking state is dispelled when wisdom dawns. In the state of sleep, while one dream she cannot see its end, In the same way, in the waking state its end leading to the next life cannot be seen. Again in the state of wisdom, when the self is identified with all, when it is in a state of non-perception, then also no dreams nor thought of future life arises. Thus it is the Chith that appears as the three worlds and this has been experienced since the dawn of creation as a dream, even in the waking State. Although gross objects appear to be real and to have substance and weight, they are in truth not real. They are none other than "Self" or Atma. As sunyam alone is what exists in dreams, so also in the waking state, objects do not have form and weight in reality. All these properties are our perceptions of varying nature. It is the light of Chith that appears as trees, stone, forest, mountain etc. The perceiver, perception and the perceived are all merely empty appearances reflected in Chidakasa.

Although we may designate the Reality by Atma or Brahman, it cannot truly be so designated. It is beyond thought processes. So all words and thought of reality are merely our delusions. All the same, they serve as a useful guide to understand the nature of Reality. All such words and ideas just mean that Reality is not any one of them.

In order to have some grasp of the nature of Reality, we may think of it as extending infinitely without any interspace, absolutely homogeneous and as hard as the core of rock. At the same time, and absolutely empty and transparent like a crystal. The veins in the rock constitute the creatures of the world. The light that shines within constitutes the world phenomenon. They constitute the world activity.

Rama How can we see them?

Vasishta: As I am inside the Atma I am able to see them. You would also be able to see them if you did likewise.

All these objects of perception are empty appearances inside the Atma. In reality nothing can happen. Everything is at rest, in undisturbed repose. Existence is the only Reality. Creation, activity, and such like expressions are all mere delusions of the mind or our percepts. Although we seem to experience them they are all unreal, since they are all empty of content.

Rama: I am inclined to think that these waking and dream experiences happen to us in the same manner as remembrances of past experiences and memory is their root cause.

Vasishta: Memory arises from what has been experienced before. But what experience can happen in Atma as there is no second thing in it. Since it cannot arise even a memory of Atma. How then can we imagine waking, dream and other states in Atma? When only the light of Chith pervades everything.

How can all these things based on a sense of duality be associated with Atma? Delusions such as these arise out of our imaginative activity. When the Chith is active then ideas arise spontaneously and they give rise to phenomenal appearances. Ideas then are the light of Chith, which undergoes no change. It is our ideas that are constantly changing, which is distorted on Chith, and they are subsequently experienced. So these various states like waking, dream and so forth are also false appearances. We can express this otherwise, that all are waking states or all are dream states and so forth. To consider everything as one is correct but to think of many is wrong, since there is no agent to effect any change. How then can memory arise in such a state? There are no objects in Atma and so no experience can arise in it.

Just as many branches, twigs, flowers etc. grow out of the tree without any idea or effort, in the same manner, this world phenomenon arises in Chith like a picture that was never drawn. Like the waves and eddies that arise spontaneously in running water, these multifarious percepts arise in Atma spontaneously. What we call mind, intellect, egoism and so forth are such percepts which arose spontaneously in Atma. The figure painted on the wall is only wall and likewise world appearance is just an appearance.

In this phenomenal world which arose spontaneously, laws of nature evolve themselves gradually. Although these are recognised to be empty of content like akasa or sunyam, yet we speak of them as

though real and full of substance. This state of things is referred to as nature.

The flowers on the trees and plants, though appearing and experienced as different from the tree, are yet not different from the tree. We may say that the flower is another name for the tree. The experience is always empty of content. Likewise are the experiences of heat in fire, cold in ice, motion in air and so forth. In the same manner, the world is not different from Chith although experienced differently. The expression "world" is another name for Chith.

We may carve many figures out of a block of wood. and then we may say that these figures were latent in the block of wood. In the same way, all the contents of the world were latent in Chith. In the state of the block of wood, the many possibilities as dolls are not apparent. It presents the appearance of a single aspect and so does Chith too.

WHO IS A JIVAN-MUKHTA.

Vasishta: One who does not treat happiness as happiness, or misery as misery and who is ever immersed in his own "self" is a jivan-mukhta. When the state of knowing or perceiving is suspended, or remains withdrawn in one, he is a Jivan-Mukhta.

Rama: Would it not indicate an inert state, if one remains unaffected by pain or pleasure?

Vasishta: One who has his mind withdrawn in his own "self" and is in that state permanently and

who is the very light of illumination himself will not be considered to be in an inert state. One who has discarded all doubts and has understood the nature of objects cannot be said to be in an inert state.

In the empty world of perceptions, the activity that continually takes place in it is brought to Consciousness as world phenomena. There is no substance and no world in such perceptions. It is neither nothing nor yet a perception. It may be called a world not different from the akasa in which it appears. When we recall to our mind a very distant object, what intervenes between us and the object? Not different from it is the nature of this world of our perception. When the great dissolution takes place, everything is destroyed and we have one vast nothingness. In that state, nothing can happen and nothing can be created. To say, then, that this world of substance and form came out of such a state is just like having seen the son of a sterile woman. What we see and perceive is not the world phenomenon but the Atma. As, when we slip from the state of sleep to dream, we see many phenomena, in like manner, although we are rooted in the Atma, we see this phenomenal world as dream phenomena. In short, the Atma sees the world as a dream within itself. All that are perceived as objects, form, act of perceiving, mentation and the characteristics of these, exist only as Atma.

People in general, however, are subject to two kinds of delusions, viz: (1) to consider that which does not exist as real and thereby to undergo pleasure

and pain and (2) to consider the Reality as non-existing and thereby being in a cloud of ignorance. The ways of the worldly beings are thus topsy-turvy. In the same way, that the same Chith undergoes experiences in dream and sleep, so also it is the same Atma that is experienced in the waking and Turiya states. All these so called various states like waking, dream etc. would be differentiated only by thorough-going ignorant people. All the differences that are spoken about are only in the words that we use but not in what they convey. The purpose of these words is to impart knowledge. In truth, one would not find even their scent in the Reality. Just as a man recalling a dream, derives pleasure or pain according to what he imagines, so also do the waking experiences give rise to feelings that are imagined about them.

MEMORY

Earth, water and other elements were only in the state of ideas when conceived by Brahma. My contention, therefore, is that they are not different from the ideas born out of our imagination except that later on they were called by various names. Existence is the one thing which is common to all of them. How then can we attribute any reality to the so called objects or what we call buddhi? If we should consider that a jiva is born then release is equally true. After release there can then be no further rebirth nor memory of past births. Thus, it is wrong to think that there was any creation at any time.

If perception is considered real, then cause-effect phenomenon is also real, since the world of perceptions is bound by this law. This is a fact of ordinary experience. In relation to this, memory is also a fact of experience. But to a Gnani, perception is contrary to his experiences, be it the past, present or future. To him there is only one Reality at all times which is the Atma. In this state, no particular thing can be imagined. Without objects or ideas, there can be no memory either. Where can one look for them in the Atma? in the Gnani's view all that happen are spontaneous phenomena, which others look upon as cause-effect phenomena giving rise to memory also. The Gnani does not experience the relationship, since each phenomenon subsides immediately.

Rama: While the Atma is all-inclusive and is in the form of experience, how does it think of the body as the "self"? Then how does Chith have the quality of a stone and also dream perceptions? How does it slip away from being stone-like?

Vasishta: Like the body that expands in the form of many organs, like the branches of a tree that expand as leaves, flowers, fruits etc., like the akasa that is established as Sunyam, like the Chith which appears as a dream city or other objects in dreams, like the body which appears as skin, bone, blood etc., the Atma which is the All appears as this body too.

It is the one and the same entity that is in activity or repose; so also is the Atma the same, in howsoever

many forms it may appear. It is this same Atma that appears as trees and animals. Just as dreams appear unreal on waking, so do these world-phenomena appear unreal when wisdom dawns. Chidakasa is the only Reality. There is none to see nor objects to be seen. Dream phenomena will alone explain the illusory nature of the world phenomena. Like waves on the ocean's surface, millions of worlds appear in Chidakasa and then disappear.

The subtle movement that arises in Chidakasa is known as activity. If this is in the form of ideas then it is known as Brahma. The name Brahma or Virata-Purusha is given to this self-same entity. It is purely in the form of imaginative activity and all objects are only in the form of ideas. Creation is purely imaginative and perception is just an outward movement from the Atma to the idea and it is of the nature of idea, which cannot have form and weight.

The gist of what has been said up to now is that world phenomena, bondage, Release etc. are all mere mental concepts and are subtle in nature i.e. as good as sunyam. Ideas of form and substance are due to our ignorance and last only as long as the body lasts. Even after one attains full wisdom, he will be subject to these perceptions but they subside as soon as they appear. Creation and dissolution happen successively and instantaneously. Since the state of creation does not last, bondage does not arise. This is the indication for having attained wisdom or the state beyond perceptions or the state of Release, or Nirvana or Nirvikalpa Samadhi and so forth.

But this very same state is discarded by almost all as if it were a dull and inert state. Were it really so, then everybody can get into that state very easily. In sleep, there is neither creation nor destruction. But in the state of Release both arise in rapid succession. That is why this state is given a name which is distinct from the three states waking, dream and sleep and it can arise only in the state known as waking.

To reach this state, mental reactions must subside and one must follow the path of knowledge expatiated in detail in this work. No other means like prayers, tapas, contemplation nor others nor all of them put together will be of any avail. These will be useful to attain a more blessed state than the present one but not for Release, as this can be attained only by wisdom. When ignorance is completely dispelled and thereby every sort of mental reaction subsides, then alone wisdom dawns and release is obtained.

If this work be repeatedly read and enquiry is conducted, there can be no doubt that ignorance will be dispelled. Every one will be profited to the extent he grasps the subject. The farther you proceed with this work, the clearer will be your grasp of the earlier portions. It is on this basis that this work has been written. It is written in a simple manner so that all may understand it. It is divided into two parts and even if the first part be read and reflected upon, much of the misery that haunts one will be dispelled. Even though this work did not originate with creation but was written by a Rishi, still it is the most appropriate

one for acquiring wisdom. If other shastras are helpful for the same purpose, one may certainly follow them.

Rama: All that you have said so far pertain to the existing universe of our experience. What can we learn about the vanished worlds and the worlds yet to come.

Vasishta: You have learnt what this world of your perceptions signifies by its content and by the words used to denote it. There can be neither a word like "world" nor does it signify anything. They were coined in order to carry on mutual conversation. If you have understood about this world, then you may be deemed to have understood all the worlds of the past and future. The world is purely of the nature of Chith appearing spontaneously and continuing to appear in the same manner.

This world phenomenon appears in every atom and so worlds are infinite in number like the atoms. While one cannot count even the existing worlds how can one deal with the worlds to come? Further, it is purposeless. About this subject, I once had occasion to ask my father Brahma, viz: wherefrom these world phenomena appeared and how they were cognised? He replied to me as follows:—

Brahma: The number of worlds that are objects of perception are countless and they rise and set in Brahma. This universe is akasic in nature and is identical with Chith. The Chith is either active or in repose. While it is active it imagines itself to be a jiva and following this thought there arises in succession, buddhi,

manas and other ideas. Thereupon it creates for itself the three worlds mentally. This is how plants and animals arose. Each such subtle jiva establishes for itself a world of its own. Thus the worlds that arise out of ignorance are crores upon crores. But as soon as wisdom dawns all these worlds vanish and emptiness alone remains. In that state there is neither a seer nor a seen object, nor cause nor effect.

Rama According to you the world phenomenon arises in Brahma without a cause in the same manner as our dreams. But how can something happen without a cause and then become an object?

Vasishta: Everyone perceives or experiences only what he has previously imagined and nothing else. The imagined object and imagination are the same and they are identical with Brahma. Things with cause or without cause for their origin both arise in Brahma and this is not at all strange. But we said Brahma is one without a second and unchanging. How then can we posit a world within it? And so there is no room for the question about the origin of the world, as nothing came out of it.

Rama: Let us argue from the standpoint of the ignorant. How can the world phenomena arise without a cause?

Vasishta: Just as a tree cannot grow in empty akasa, so also can there be no ignorance in what is all pure knowledge. There does not truly exist such a thing as ignorance. This ignorance is also a thing that is known and hence forms part of knowledge. It is the

one faculty that gives rise to a twofold idea. Even though one may pass on from ignorance to wisdom, just as one slips from dream to sleep, yet it is one Atma that is a witness to both states.

Then if we discuss about cause-effect phenomena, everything must be traced back to creation. Then the next question will be what is the cause of creation? This is a meaningless question and so are the other questions too, such as why fire should be hot, ice cold and so forth. Usually two causes are attributed to them, viz: (1) Iswara is their cause, or (2) Nature is the cause. The question would then arise what is the cause for Iswara and so it cannot be accepted. Then "Nature" too cannot be accepted as a cause for it is simply another expression but no explanation. According to us, cause and effect are identical phenomena and not different. In this case, no questions of any sort arise. When everything is said to be Brahman, there is no scope for any sort of questions.

To sum up then, there is no need for shastras or enquiry or anything. The phenomena of creation arise in Brahman without a cause and appear like dream-phenomena. The jiva which gets rid of this vasana is said to have obtained release.

Rama: What are known as objects are of two kinds, viz: (1) those that have form and substance without the capacity to mix among themselves and known as gross; (2) those which can pervade everywhere and mix freely with anything and known as subtle. Our body and prana belong to these two

categories. The subtle prana controls the body and makes it do its bidding. But the same prana that mixes with external objects is unable to control them as it likes. Why so?

Vasishta: The bodily functions are carried on by virtue of what is known as perceptions. The same perceptions expand as world phenomena outside. These perceptions are not to be seen in inanimate matter.

Rama: The gross body belongs to the class of inert matter. How then are they made active by the subtle perceptions?

Vasishta: What you call gross matter does not at all exist. What exists is only Samvith which has no limitations of any sort. This is always in repose. So, the gross matter is no more than a dream perception of Samvith. Although we experience it in reality it does not exist. They are all the result of pure activity and cannot be said to be either something or nothing. Let me tell you a small story pertaining to this.

THE STORY OF THE SONS OF INDHU

Vasishta: This story has already been told by me. Therefore I shall confine myself to that portion which answers the point raised by you. In one corner of this world there was a Brahmin by name Indhu who had earned a great name for himself by virtue of his tapas, study of shastras and the proper discharge

of his daily duties. He had ten sons who were equally noted for their mental prowess and character. While Rudras, the father, died suddenly. His wife, who did not relish life after the death of her husband, also died soon after.

After this calamity, the sons, having lost the zest for worldly life, took to the path of mental abstraction. Having assembled together and discussed what status they should strive after, they decided that the status of Brahma was alone worth attempting. Accordingly they seated themselves in padmasana pose and, having firmly planted the idea of Brahma, concentrated on it without interruption and went into samadhi. As they had been in samadhi for a very long time, their physical bodies perished for want of nourishment. Their minds having become one with the idea of Brahma and permeated everything in that capacity they continued to exist in that state for ever thereafter. Thus the ten sons of Indhu became then the ten lords or Brahmas for the ten directions. They experienced the world phenomena as pure sense experiences empty of any substance or content.

The world of phenomena exists truly, only in the state of "Being" as Chith and as "No-thing". The truth about it is that the akasic world exists in the Chidakasa as akasa only. The world, our bodies etc. do not exist as "things" but as percepts of things. These percepts are impalpable and meet with no obstruction from the so-called palpable things. What we become aware of in our waking state are only

these percepts of things. Such awarenesses are no more real than akasa.

Rama: I have a doubt and I would request you to clarify it. While I was engaged one day at taking lessons along with other pupils from my guru, there came to us a worthy brahmin who appeared to be steeped in learning and tapas and beaming with intelligence. I told him that he looked like one engaged in a great effort and requested him to tell me where he came from. He then replied as follows:

Brahmin: Yes, I am engaged in a great effort at seeking the Truth. I belong to the Videha country which rivals Indraloka in its splendour. I am a brahmin and am called Kundhadhanta because of my white teeth.

Sometime back I got a distaste for all worldly amusements, following which I went in search of devas, rishis and enlightened brahmins across many countries and finally settled down to pursue tapas in the slopes of Sriparvatha, which I diligently performed for a long time. There was an area close by which was however entirely devoid of trees or plants or even grass and water, so much so that it looked more like the reflection of empty akasa. While I was going through this area one day, I saw a solitary tree in the centre of it. When I went close to it, I was surprised to see a man hanging down from one of its branches with the head downwards. On examining closely I found the man to be alive but in a state of samadhi. As I was anxious to learn something about the man, I waited a long time for him.

to wake up. As he did not do so, I shouted out loudly when he woke up, glanced at me but kept silent. Then I put him some questions as to who he was, where he came from and what the object of his rigorous tapas was. To this he replied that I should not meddle in other people's affairs and then continued to be silent. As I was not satisfied with this and as it only increased my eagerness to know about him, I persisted in questioning him to which he finally made up his mind to reply.

He said that, while he was still a youth, he happened to hear a saying one day, namely, that if one wanted to experience all sorts of enjoyments, he should be a king. On hearing this, he had been seized with a desire to become the lord of the seven islands amidst the seven oceans. In order to achieve this, he said he had come to that spot and performed rigorous tapas for 12 long years and until he achieved his object he would continue his tapas. After saying this he remained silent.

Then I too established myself there in order to look after him. When six months had elapsed, there came one day with the rising sun one Deva-dhuta, as if he travelled with the rays and as if stepping aside from them he stopped before us and said a few words. He said that the tapasvin had succeeded in his object and that he would become a King of the seven islands as desired and rule over them for 7000 years. After saying this, the Deva-dhuta disappeared.

As the man had not become aware of this since he was in samadhi, I woke him up, told him

what had happened and that he might henceforth discontinue his tapas and resume his worldly life. As he agreed to this, I untied the knots around his legs and freed him. After staying in the same place for two days, we set out like the sun and the moon towards his home in Mathura. On the way we crossed a beautiful grove. My companion instead of proceeding further along the proper path, went across a cross-cut, when I asked him his object in doing so. He replied that he was going to see his brothers, who had likewise undertaken tapas with the same object. They had all been together in the same place for six months after which he had gone away from them.

When we reached the particular place, which ought to have been a beautiful grove, we found it to be an absolutely desolate place. There was only a solitary and stunted Kadamba tree with an old man sitting under its shade. My companion, eager to know about the fate of his brothers, approached the old man. Having sensed the object of my companion, I immediately tried to wake up the old man from his samadhi. As nothing seemed to be of any avail, I raised a loud and deafening noise, when he woke up and looked at us. He asked us where exactly he was and what the day and year was. When I gave him the information, he again relapsed into samadhi for a little while. Then he woke up and spoke to us as follows:

Kadamba Tapasvin : I shall narrate to you what I know by what I see by my sixth sense. While I

was the ruler of Malwa, there came upon me a sense of vairagyam to all worldly things and so I discarded the kingship and sought after the abodes of rishis, in order to learn to cross the Ocean of samsara. After wandering over many lands, I came to this grove of Gauri and spent many years in contemplation and samadhi.

In this grove, Gouri had once performed tapas for 10 long years to propitiate Parameswara. This grove had once rivalled the gardens of Indraloka i.e. while she was still there. But as soon as she went away it lost its beauty and charm. This particular Kadamba tree had been reared like a child by her and so it continues to remain with all its charms even now.

Sometime later, your companion came here with his seven brothers and lived here for sometime honoured by the rishis. All these eight persons were imbued with the same idea and performed tapas towards that end, viz: to become the Lord of the seven islands of this earth. After about six months, your companion went away to Sripurvatha, another went to Karthikeya, the third to Varanasi and the fourth to the Himalayas. The remaining four had in a little time obtained the necessary boons from the particular deities whom they were propitiating and went back home. And now these eight brothers will meet one another in their home and after their death they will achieve their cherished desire in Dharmayuga.

After the departure of the brothers from this place the other rishis too went away one after another

I alone continued to remain in this place. The trees of this grove had been cut down ruthlessly by the adjoining cityfolk and they let this one tree standing, out of compassion for me.

Brahmin : What you say is quite surprising indeed ! How can these eight brothers rule the same seven islands simultaneously ?

Kadamba Tapasvin : This is not the only thing that looks strange and inconsistent. Let me tell you more surprising things. After these brothers went away from their homes to gain their own ends, their wives, in order to drown their own grief and to spend the time, also took to tapas. When they had performed 100 Chandrayanams the deities who had been invoked told them the following, unseen by them " The time is now come for you to obtain the reward for your tapas You may therefore ask what boons you want." One of these eight women, on behalf of all, asked for freedom from death for all of them. To this the deity said that those that are subject to birth cannot but face death and so she asked them to name a boon as befitted their tapas. Then the same woman requested that, when their husbands died, their souls should not depart outside their homes. The deity gave the desired boon and departed.

Not content with the boons, these ladies set out on a pilgrimage along with their parents, just when their husbands were about to return to their homes. During the journey, they happened to go past one short statured funny looking man, hair upright

and body smeared over with ashes. Not knowing who he was they passed him by without greeting him even. But this was no less a personage than the great sage Dhurvasa. Piqued at having been ignored the sage uttered a curse that their boons might give them results contrary to their expectations. When they heard this they were frightened and immediately apologised for the want of reverence shown by them out of ignorance and then returned to their homes. Thus, you should know that such incompatible phenomena do exist in countless numbers on this planet. What stranger phenomena can one see than that all this world phenomena arises in the emptiness of Akasa?

Kundhadhanta : Oh, King of Rishis! What you said is most surprising. The final results are all opposed to one another. How will they be realised? According to the boons received by the wives, the souls of their husbands after death should not depart from their homes. Yet the husbands, according to their own boons, had to conquer various lands and become the lords of the earth. The number of islands existing is seven. Everyone of the eight has to be the lord of these same islands at the same time. How can all these conflicting things come about?

Kadamba Tapasvin : I shall tell you how these will come to happen in the future. These eight brothers will get back to their homes and live happily for sometime with their wives. Then one after another they will die and their bodies will be burnt in accordance with their custom. The jiva will stand merged with

the akasa during the period of a muhurtha and will be insentient as in sleep. Then it will resume its activity and show its leanings according to the past vasanas, both good and bad. These waiting souls will then be visited by the respective deities who have to reward them for their merits and punish them for their evils. When both sets of deities come at the same time, there will ensue a talk between the two groups as follows:—

Good Deities : Oh ye bad deities! Stand aside! This is the time when we have to fulfil the desires of these souls.

Bad Deities : Oh good deities! What you say is not correct. You should stand aside. It is our turn now.

Good Deities : It is not so. You just represent the curses of a mere rishi, while we are born of the gods and are superior to you. Therefore we must take precedence in bestowing our gifts on these souls,

Bad Deities : No! Not so! Our rishi is the favoured one of god Rudra himself, who is the foremost among the gods and hence we are the superior beings. So these souls should get their desert from us first, which they had earned.

Good Deities : Oh ye, that represent curses! We cannot resolve our dispute here. So, instead of indulging in further arguments we shall go to Brahma and implore him to decide the issue.

However stubborn one may be, he succumbs to cunning. The bad deities will accordingly yield and both groups will then go to Brahma.

Brahma, after hearing the two groups of deities, will point out that success will go to that one who represents real effort and solid worth. So they might ascertain for themselves who has got this in a greater measure. Immediately each group will enter the bodies of the other group to ascertain for themselves what the other group is worth. After this is done, the bad deities will speak as follows.

Bad Deities : Oh, Lord ! We have now realised how little we are really worth. We are without any strength, without essence. On the other hand, our sisters are rooted in long continued effort and have the grace of Atma and so they are more fitted to confer their boons. It is Samvith or the Intelligent principle which, by virtue of being deeply and strenuously, contemplated upon takes on a body. According to the nature of the contemplation and effort, It perceives the same outside and experiences it. The results assume various shapes according to the time, place, and circumstances. What proceeds from Truth is always more powerful. Curses proceed from untruth and so have very little power. Boons then are superior to curses. If both are equally strong, then the result will be of a mixed type like a mixture of water and milk. But all these together are no more than dream phenomena. We are therefore the vanquished ones and so we go.

After these deities go away, the two sets of good deities, who had to bestow their gifts, will request Brahma to tell them how their own gifts, contradictory to each other, would obtain fulfilment.

Brahma : Ye deities of the Islands ! Ye deities of the homes ! Wherefrom are these doubts of yours ? Those deserving souls are already established in their respective places according to the gifts they had earned. So soon as their tapas was over they had immediately earned their rewards too.

Now let me dispel your doubts. This world-perception is experienced by everyone within the emptiness of the minute Chith like a dream phenomenon. Is it any wonder then for these seven islands to be experienced within a house ? Whether the world of experience exists or not, it is experience that takes place inside the emptiness of Chith. It has no substance, nor weight. All that is experienced is Chith and not world phenomena. There is no such real world at any time.

Kadhamba Tapasvin : After hearing these words of Brahma, both sets of deities will be relieved of their gross bodies and in their subtle states will repair to their respective abodes, viz: the seven islands and the homes of the brothers.

These eight brothers, after their death, will be reborn and imagine that they are in the same homes. In proper time everyone will become the lord of the seven islands without the knowledge

of the others. One will be in Ujjain and rule his kingdom from within his home enjoying all the pleasures of life. Another residing in Sakhadvya will visit all the four quarters conquering the lands and will finally proceed towards the land of the Nagas. In like manner, all the remaining brothers too will become the lords of what each one imagines to be the seven islands. Every effort or tapas results in an experience of what had previously been one's inner desire.

Kundhadhantan : It is still not clear to me. How can one become a lord of seven islands while remaining confined to his home?

Kadhamba Tapasvin : The nature of the Chith is such that ideas arising in it are experienced as realities externally.

Kundhadhantan : If Reality were one, unchanging and the root cause of all phenomena, how then can it appear as many having varying characteristics?

Kadhamba Tapasvin : The so called "many" spoken of and thought about do not really exist. Just as the true form of a whirlpool is only water, although the appearance is something else, so also do the so called things of the world appear real, though they arise in pure emptiness. What appears as motion is no motion; what appears as a mountain is really no mountain. All these so called things are mere ideas arising in Chith. Such ideas which arose at the dawn of creation, having been repeatedly thought about and ruminated on, have taken firm

root in us as external realities. The one Chith takes the form of lakhs of soldiers, in our dreams. Even after a fire is put out we have the perception of heat, so also are these world forms constantly being retained in our imagination. As fruits, flowers, leaves, branches etc. go to make up a tree, so also do these multifarious world forms go to make up the Chith. The expression "Chith" and "World" mean one and the same Reality. When two substances are mixed there arises the appearance of a new thing; similarly the essence of Chith is the cause of the appearance of many forms. Imaginative faculty and the ideas it gives birth to have no limitations of any sort; nothing can obstruct the progress or expansion of the former. Plants, animals and men are all purely imaginative ideas.

The laws of Nature, the world, the multifarious objects, the motions of the Sun and Moon, all these have arisen out of Chith and have taken the abiding forms that we see. Why should they have taken only these forms? Because the initial or original ideas were so. The entire universe is rooted in existence and non-existence.

Kundhadhantan : It is only what was seen before which is subsequently recalled by memory. But these are one's own ideas. Then what occasioned the ideas at the dawn of creation?

Kadhamba Tapasvin : The original ideas that arose spontaneously at the dawn of creation are

what are called perceptions. When they are repeatedly experienced then arises memory.

I have told you all that is required to be told. You must hereafter reflect over these repeatedly if you would profit by them. You may now take leave so that I may return to my contemplation.

Kundhadhantan : After this he resumed his contemplation. We could not clear any further doubts of ours. Then we proceeded to the home of the brothers and reached it in a short time. The brothers lived together with their wives happily for a time. Then they died one after another after some time and then I betook myself to see the Kadhamba Tapasvin again, not knowing what to do. He was in deep contemplation and I had to wait for three months before he woke up and spoke to me.

Kadhamba Tapasvin : What made you come here again? I cannot remain even one minute away from the state of contemplation. I have told you enough about the path of Release. You have now only to practise these precepts to reach your goal. But if you want to hear more about it, you may go to Ayodhya and meet Rama, son of King Dasaratha. Through him, you may get the opportunity to hear the wonderful discourses of the great Sage Vasishta. You had better go thither.

Kundhadhantan : After saying this, he resumed his contemplation and I came away to you.

Rama : This man by my side is the person who came to me and narrated his experiences, I hope that he profitted himself by hearing your discourses. You may yourself ask him about it.

Vasishta : Oh! Kundhadhanta! Have you learned what you wanted to learn about the path of Release?

Kundhadhantan : All my doubts are set at rest. I have learned all that I wanted to learn and I am at perfect peace. I know now that this world of our perceptions is not different from Atma and is an illusion arising in the background of Atma.

Vasishta : Very surprising indeed that you, at least, have learned the truth about Atma! You have become a Mahatma.

Now to continue our discourse, the perceptions of world phenomena seemingly arising in Brahman are due to our deluded senses. But even these delusions are also nought but Brahman, for the reason that nothing different from It can arise in It.

What can truly be said to exist always is Brahman alone. Since all the rest are subject to change or dissolution, they can only be deemed as non-existent things or they may be said to be mere appearances. Brahman is all pervading at all times and in a state beyond speech and thought and unchanging. So whenever any idea arises anywhere in It, then that idea gives rise to a phenomenal appearance there. However far the perception may travel, the appearance arises there, because there is no point in space which is not

pervaded by Brahman. It may be considered to be stretched over all space without break of continuity. In such vastness of Brahman, the number of possible perceptions that may arise are countless. Inanimate matter, plants, animals, men, devas and asuras, all these arose only as ideas at first and in a spontaneous manner and continued to appear thereafter. The reason for such continued appearance is ignorance. This is what is known as Nature.

This Brahman which is pure, composed of units of Intelligence or Chith, has a two-fold aspect. (1) The non-perceiving aspect as if like inanimate nature; (2) The dream aspect giving rise to perceptual phenomena. The first aspect gave rise to the inanimate things of the world, But we cannot say that they are totally devoid of perception. It is so little that we are unable to perceive it. If they did not have this little amount of perception, they cannot remain in any stable state. The second aspect of Brahman gave rise to the living entities. They have varying degrees of perceptual faculties, the human species being endowed with the maximum. Hence, it is this species that has the faculty both to be susceptible to the percepts to the utmost and to free itself from them, since it is endowed with both the faculties of Chith mentioned above. When the dream aspect subsides, then Release is the result which is akin to sleep and if wakefulness arises in this state, then dream phenomena arises.

Creation and dissolution are also kindred states. When the Chith is asleep, then it is in a state of dissolution; when it dreams creation is the result. We are continuously experiencing these states for very very short durations. But if such experiences be long-continued then those become Release and life-phenomena. Both however are mere appearances in relation to Brahman and are ephemeral states. Such appearances do not arise in me. Thus, in the dynamic aspect of the Chith the devas and asuras are generated by way of creation. In its aspect of repose both attain salvation.

Rama : What proof is there for the statement that Chith itself is both devas and asuras and that it is also the world appearance ?

Varishta : Chith is not merely devas and asuras but also you, me, plants, animals and everything else, which are all appearances that arise in its minutest interior. Its active aspect is all these and in its state of repose all these are dissolved. The whole universe is reflected in every atom of it and every single being of this universe imagines for itself a world of its own. But since it is the Chith that gives rise to these appearances, these latter can be none other than Chith, whatever the differences among them may be.

Rama : How can all this Nature, Sun, Moon and Stars take their birth in Brahman which is unchanging and in perfect poise ?

Vasishta : What I have been repeatedly saying up to now is that Brahman alone exists always and none of these things were ever created. What came out of Brahman is what we call perceptive faculty. In the state of non-existence, whatever happens can only be spontaneous. But when once something happens then it is usual for the same happening to repeat itself. In this manner arose at first the five-fold ideas of elementary principles. The perceptive faculty, without losing its own nature, imagined these five different ideas and established itself in them. Then when these ideas took firm root by being constantly brooded upon, they condensed to the five-fold elements, akasa, vayu, tejas, appu and prithvi. While these five elements were being formed, the sun, moon and the rest of the material universe also came into being. What happens repeatedly came to be known as Nature or natural laws. The universe was not formed according to any pre-existing laws. What happened spontaneously at first and then recurred again and again and gradually expanded gave rise, in course of time, to the so-called laws of Nature. But all these are of the category of appearances. All the formations that have thus taken place are the formations of the perceptive faculty. Thus, what was evolved was the original perceptive faculty, five-fold sense perceptions and five-fold objects. Thus, the evolution in the form of this mighty universe is that of the perceptive faculty, which is designated as the perceptual world. Really the world of form and substance does not exist.

The cause of the expansion of the perceptual faculty as the five-fold elements is the idea of "Self" consciousness. This idea is very very feebly felt in these elements and so we consider them as inert. All the same they are also endowed with activity, the consciousness of "self". As they have rooted themselves in a single unchanging state, they are considered as gross or inert.

Then the "self" idea becomes more intense and active resulting in further expansion accompanied by greater activity. Since this activity has now the five ideas of elementary substances and their gross counterparts as the field of activity, the imaginative faculty has great scope for expansion. This root idea "self" having activity or instability as its fundamental characteristic, gradually gave birth to the plant world, animal world and human species. This is how the present world of our experience came into being.

But if we probe deeply into the nature of this world which took many yugas to shape itself, we will realise the truth, viz: that the perceptual faculty or imagination developed ideas or appearances in the emptiness of akasa. At first a single idea or appearance, then one after another and many more took firm root, because they all sprang from Brahman which is Truth or Reality. Then various combinations of these ideas or appearances brought about a mighty flood of them.

One point must be noted. Ideas or imagination are of instantaneous duration and through them

appearances arise. Thereafter, when this perception arises repeatedly the appearances give the impression of being permanent. Again, the appearance or phenomenon gives rise to the same impressions according to time place and circumstances as well as the mental mood.

Thus, the various phenomenal appearances arise, sustain themselves and disappear. But they are all instantaneous phenomena. Since they spring from Truth or Reality, they give us the appearance of reality. In conjunction with time phenomenon they appear to be permanent. Whatever be the nature of these phenomena, they appear to be permanent. Whatever, however, be the nature of these phenomena, Brahman continues to be Brahman always,

The world phenomena may thus be said to be due to imaginative creation. It is this which in course of time came to be called by various names. Since it is inclined towards activity, it is called Chith. Since it participates in life phenomena, it is called jiva. When in activity, it is called Chith and when it keeps out of contact with substances or ideas and differentiates one from another it is called buddhi. In like manner, it is called manas, "self" perception, according to the nature of the activity or function. When it functions in association with the five sense perceptions, "self" idea, buddhi and manas, it is called the Purusha, Ashtakam or the eight-aspected one. Still other names given to it are Prakriti and ignorance.

Imagination, which is subtle in nature and devoid of any substance and so akin to Sunyam, manifests itself through the five sense perceptions and these are called its subtle body. It is this that is variously called Brahma, Siva, Narayanan, Sanatana and Virata Purusha,

This original Being known as Brahma, whenever He imagines something, indulges immediately in activity and incessant brooding and this activity result in the something being experienced outside. Then, what is experienced is assumed by us to be real. It is this which is strange. In truth the Knower, the Known Object and Knowledge are all unreal. Brahman is the only Reality.

Rama : How to release oneself from the present bondage which is so firmly rooted in us? How can we also free ourselves from the urge to know or perceive?

Vasishta : If the truth about the objects of the world be known, then one can free oneself from bondage. Then, if one is firmly established in Knowledge, Release is obtained.

Rama : Knowledge is a separate truth. Then what is this discriminative Knowledge that we speak of?

Vasishta : To know that Knowledge remains only as Knowledge and not as objects is known as gnana.

Rama : When you, I and this world about us are before our very eyes and are experienced by us, how can we say that they do not exist?

Vasishtha : When the creator of this world and its objects did not exist even at the beginning of creation, how can we grant their existence now?

Rama : But they are experienced by all.

Vasishtha : We see many strange things in our dreams; why do you not admit them also as real?

Rama : When the great dissolution takes place, then what is left behind is that Great Being who has neither a beginning nor an end. Why cannot that Being be considered as the cause of the phenomenal world?

Vasishtha : The result cannot be different from the cause. You cannot get yarn out of a pot; so then, how could the Great Being give rise to anything like this phenomenal world, when it is itself akin to Sunyam?

Rama : Why cannot the world lie latent after the great dissolution and sprout out again?

Vasishtha : Which great Soul can attest it?

Rama : If then the world itself never came into existence, how did the delusion about it rise in the possession of peoples' minds?

Vasishtha : In the first place the phenomenal cause-effect, does not exist in Brahman, nor existence nor non-existence. Chith and Chetana are identical.

Rama : If a machine has to be operated, then it requires the effort of a human being. In like

manner there should be some agent to set on foot the activity. Who is that agent?

Vasishtha : There is no entity who can be said to be a Knower. How then can there be knowers of objects? It is only the Brahman that is all pervading and that appears as the knower.

Rama : Then how did these delusions like "you" and the "world" come about?

Vasishtha : When all are one, how can we talk about delusions?

Rama : Whether dreams are real or unreal, the results arising from them are very real. The same is true about our false ideas of the world.

Vasishtha : Whether we consider dreams or our ideas of the world, they give rise to pain only, if they are considered as real?

Rama : The unreality of dreams is realised in waking. When will we realise about the unreality of world phenomena?

Vasishtha : When the true nature of the things of the world and their states before and after become known. Then all ignorance will vanish.

Rama : When the thoughts about the things of the world become less and less, how would they be perceived subsequently? Further, how can ignorance be dispelled by this process?

Vasishtha : When memories of things become vague, then world perceptions will be similar in content to things imagined by us.

Rama : How could the form and content of things be affected by our memory of them?

Vasishtha : The world and its contents are imaginary and they appear to have become endowed with form and content by the condensation of the imaginative ideas. So, by the process of counter-imagination, the things opposite of the nature of the ideas. What doubts can you have about it?

Rama : But these vasanas of things have been the result of a great many life-periods. How can we shake them off?

Vasishtha : As soon as the true nature of things is realised, they will be felt as arising from our ignorance. Then world perceptions will also subside.

Rama : How can our suffering go by the mere realisation that the world is just like the fancied object of a young boy?

Vasishtha : By reason of the fact that the suffering is also born out of imagination. So, when imagination subsides, the imagined grief also subsides.

Rama : What is Chittam? What does enquiry about it mean? How can such enquiry lead to true knowledge?

Vasishtha : When Chith leans to activity it is called Chittam. To realise this is the end of enquiry. By realising it, the activity itself subsides.

Rama : We experience only what become our objects of perception. If the world phenomena be

unreal and cannot be perceived, how is it actually experienced?

Vasishtha : Truly, we experience only what are unreal and which are mere appearances and serve no purpose. These experiences arise both in the waking and dreaming states.

Rama : Only what is experienced in the waking state appear in dreams and in our imagination.

Vasishtha : Are they then different from one another?

Rama : No! The experiences are all alike.

Vasishtha : Yes, all the states are alike. Then, why does not the house, that topples down in dream, appear so in the waking state?

Rama : I understand. Only the wise man can understand that the world-phenomena are no more real than dream phenomena. How can the ordinary people realise it?

Vasishtha : If one enquires into the cause of the world phenomena appearing again and again in our thoughts and if he comes to the right conclusion, then he will learn the Truth. Is the result different from the cause?

Rama : I am now freed from all doubts and I am in complete tranquility. And I will not slip away from this state any more.

Vasishtha : I know that you are in a state of wisdom, both from your talk and indications in the face. To say, what has hitherto been said, in a few

words : While imagination is at play, world phenomena arise and when it is inactive they dissolve. Both imagination and its opposite are two aspects of the same all pervading Being, like motion and rest of the air. The wise man also partakes of this nature. And so, whether he is active or inactive, he does not slip away from his true state of perfect equipoise and he is as firm in that state as a rock. I am in that state and may you also be in the same state !

Although you are established in wisdom, I will put you a question for you to explain, so that you may improve your knowledge. It is only by explaining to others that one gets clarity. How can we deny the existence of this world which we uphold and experience ?

Rama : All experiences of the world and its objects are in the shape of percepts. They are momentary experiences and are devoid of content and so akasic in nature. They are ideas of our mind i.e. imaginative products. As they have been voluntarily sought about and experienced again and again for a long time, they have assumed in our eyes form and content, which are really not there. This combination of sense perceptions is known as Virata-Purusha. It has only a subtle body. It is this that is experienced as this vast world. So, such a momentary phenomenon, akasic in nature, cannot be considered as eternal or as the Truth.

Then, these percepts arise spontaneously without any cause. But if there should be a cause, it should

be of the same nature as the result. But Brahman is unchanging, eternal and all-repose. It cannot be said to be the cause of this constantly changing phenomenal world. So, when we cannot assign a cause for the origin of this world phenomena, we can only consider them as never having been created.

Yasishta : Why cannot we consider the two related in the manner of the seed and the sprout ?

Rama : We do not see any trace of the sprout in the seed. It is only the essence of the seed that pervades the seed. In like manner, we do not see even a trace of the world phenomena in Brahman. Brahman is not endowed with substance, form or activity, whereas the gross world possesses all these qualities. So, the latter cannot be derived from the former. It is like expecting to see mount Meru within the atom. But it is true that we have experience of the world phenomena constantly. Both the wise as well as the ignorant people have these experiences. They are however subject to constant changes and dissolution. Moreover they are dependant on our imagination and are no more than mere percepts. Hence we cannot call them as either Real or un-real. They appear before us like dreams and disappear when wisdom dawns. In truth, Reality remains unrealised and false appearances are experienced. In any case, whatever is an object of perception exists only in a subtle state such that it is all-pervasive and not with form and substance. In short, pure rays of illumination appear in multifarious colours, and these can by no means be construed as realities. Brahman cannot

be established by arguments or by words. It can be experienced only in the state of perfect quiescence of mind.

Valmiki: After saying these words, Rama was wrapt in silence for a while. Then he turned to Vasishtha again and put him a few questions.

Rama: Brahman can be indicated by absolute mounam i.e. of the mind. It can only be experienced by everyone for himself. Shastras and the teachings of a guru only tend to accentuate differences; how then can such words and expressions serve to reach the highest state?

Vasishtha: Rama! It is true that shastras which are mere groups of words cannot serve to attain wisdom. Still they serve as a sort of guide towards it. Let me illustrate it by a small incident.

The villages of a part of the Kirata country were once afflicted with great poverty. The people did not know how to save themselves from perishing of hunger. So, one day they all assembled together to devise some means. Finally, they decided to carry on fire-wood trade and accordingly they all went into the adjoining forests in search of firewood and sold them in the neighbouring towns and cities for making a living. While at such work, some of them accidentally came across some of the treasures of the forest. A few found flowers, a few others fruits, still a few more some sandalwood or gold or precious stones which they sold and made much money out of them. Some of them therefore became prosperous in course

of time. Some were still living on woodcutting business alone. An extremely small number got Chintamani and they became rich in all kinds of possessions. Thus, although everyone set out with the idea of eking out a living by wood-cutting, many of them obtained unexpectedly various other means of increase of fortune, each one according to his zeal and effort.

Exactly similar is the nature of the results obtained from the teachings of a guru or a study of the shastras. Most people resort to them with the idea of obtaining enjoyment and some of them do realise their cherished desires. Some few resort to them just casually to learn what the purpose of these shastras is. They may unexpectedly derive enjoyment as a result. But all shastras deal only with Dharma, Artha and Kama. The same is true of the Vedas, the source of all shastras. But Brahman is something beyond them. It cannot be indicated by any jugglery of words or even by shastras. It is a state to be personally experienced by everyone. It cannot be taught or described to another person. One who has not tasted sugar can never understand its taste by any amount of description. But shastras are helpful in purifying the mind. The tamasic mind which is ever after the pursuit of pleasures becomes satwic by practise. When the satwic state is established firmly, one would unexpectedly get the experience of Brahman, just like a third thing, such as a shadow, appearing unexpectedly in the mere presence of the Sun and the Ocean. In like manner is the experience of Brahman unexpectedly obtained from one's effort and a study of the shastras.

The shastras deal with many matters, some of which confuse one's minds. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to ascertain the substance of what they say by one's own independent enquiry. Wisdom is not obtained from the teachings of the shastras; it is outside their range. But it will be known only after searching enquiry is made. The light of the Sun is rendered visible only when the rays are obstructed. But the rays are different from the obstruction. In like manner, only from the experience of the three states, waking, dream and sleep, can we know about that state which is beyond these three states and which unifies them in one state and is known as sleep in waking. This state can be reached only by a study of the shastras combined with enquiry leading to a state of mental equipoise.

Vasishta : Rama! I discussed the question of the genesis of the world and how it is sustained in Chapters III and IV. Then in chapter V I discussed the means of attaining mental equipoise. If these precepts are properly grasped and acted upon, one improves his knowledge and he will be enabled to lead his share of worldly life as if it were mere sport. After we take our birth, we have perforce to lead our lives in the environment in which we are placed. It is necessary then to know the truth about this world we live in, in early life. With the aid of this knowledge, one must achieve mental balance. Then one must make up his mind to carry out only such works as come unsought. There is then none greater than the one who observes all these precepts and attains a

state of mental equipoise. He will be considered to have attained all worldly possessions. It is a state which is higher than having the overlordship of all the three worlds. To him everyone in the world is dear. He has no hate or indifference towards any one. Even bad things appear good to him. The world will listen to what he says. Even if he did anything not approved by society, he will be extolled by the world; for mental equipoise denotes the state of Brahman.

Rama : Is it not necessary to discard activity for the sake of devoting oneself to the contemplation of Atma all the time?

Vasishta : As long as there is physical body, activity is a necessity. But such activity will not amount to karma as this latter arises only when activity is dictated by the mind for a definite purpose. But for those who do not have ideas of the subject-object relationship, activity is not related to the mind. The activity will only amount to automatic movements of organs and limbs.

There are various beliefs current as to the means to be adopted to reach this state, some of which are very strange and others go against Nature. Some observe merely the duties enjoined by the caste system, some resort to worship, some retire to the forest, some visit places of pilgrimage, some perform yagnas, some forsake all work and others engage themselves in dhyana. But all these are wrong notions, since not one of them enables one to get rid of mind phenomenon. Mind is said to have disappeared only in those who remain without any sort of

reaction whatever they may do. To achieve this, one need not go anywhere. But if one follows the precepts given in this work and practises them diligently, he is sure to obtain Release in course of time.

Oh, Rama! you have qualified yourself to reach that state now. Give up all thoughts of birth and death and remain steadfast in that state. The world picture which gives the appearance of a blossomed flower does not exist at all. All that exists is the "Self" as Brahman. Remain rooted in that idea.

Valmiki: The great sage, after stopping the discourse thus, looked round the assembly. Everyone was looking at the sage lost in admiration. There was deep silence. A few minutes later everyone stood up and made his obeisance to the sage and showered flowers on him. The sage was lost amidst this rain of flowers. Even the heavenly hosts comprising the Siddhas, Vidhyadharas and Devas were lost in wonder and admiration at hearing the great discourses and they too rained flowers on him. When once again silence was restored, some of the Siddhas spoke as follows:

Siddhas: Ever since the beginning of this Kalpa, we have heard so many different means of obtaining Release but not one of them can compare with what we have heard now. Women, boys and even animals will not go unrewarded or without some benefit by hearing these discourses. We doubt whether even Arundathi could have made the discourse so interesting by means of apt illustrations and intelligent stories. We do not expect to hear such discourses at any time

in the future too. We have now partaken of the nectar of wisdom and are now freed from all doubts and are established in bliss.

Valmiki: After saying these words, the Siddhas worshipped him with flowers and then stood silent. Then Dasaratha came down and after making his obeisances to the Maharishi, spoke these words:

Dasaratha: We are all in a state of bliss after having heard your great discourses. Whatever we may do in return for this will fall far short of the value of the discourses to us. But what I can give in return is my Kingdom, my wealth and my services. Please treat them as your own and command me.

Vasishta: A brahmin needs only a word of thanks in return. That is enough for me too. Only a kshatriya is endowed with the faculties to rule a kingdom. A brahmin is incompetent to discharge those duties.

Valmiki: After Dasaratha, Rama spoke to the sage and said that what he could give in return was only his obeisances and accordingly he made his namaskaram. Then came Lakshmana, Satrugna and others. Then Vasishta put aside all the flower heaps and then addressing those rishis who were near to him, by name, such as Visvamitra, Ghadi, Kulambhoja, Vamadeva, Bharadwaja, Pulastya, Narada, Sandilya, Bhasa, Bhrigu, Bharanda, Vatsyana, Vatsya and others, requested them to tell him if they had anything to find fault with or comment on what he had said till then.

in reply they all jointly said. "How can there be any kind of a mistake or wrong teaching in your wonderful discourses? The short-comings of many births of ours have been dispelled completely at one stroke by hearing your worthy discourses. There can be no second person, to approach you even, for discoursing on the path of gnana. You are the sole Guru to teach about attaining the Atma.

Siddhas: Sri Rama with his three brothers is the avatar of Vishnu. So these discourses, which were made to benefit him, the son of Dasaratha, who is to be the sole monarch of all the lands surrounded by the four oceans, who has at the head of his army a Raja-rishi and who has besides Vasishtha as his family guru, have also benefitted us, so that we too are freed from every kind of doubt.

Valmiki: The Siddhas thereupon rained flowers on him. And then those of the assembly too did likewise.

After a while, there was profound silence. Everyone appeared to be at complete peace of mind. Rama was also looking at the sage but without any thoughts in his mind. Then Vasishtha asked him if he had any further questions to put to him.

Rama: By your grace, I am at perfect peace and my mind is absolutely tranquil. So, I have no kind of desire, not even to ask any more questions. I am now in a state akin to sleep in waking or of not expecting the waking state after the dream. I perceive

the world as non-existent. I have no likes nor dislikes; I will indulge in only such activity as comes unsought. I feel myself to be eternal and all-pervading and so I make obeisances to myself.

Vasishtha: Rama! I am very pleased to hear what you say. You are now freed from all doubts and fears and are established in Atman. Through you, your forefathers as well as your progenitors have become blessed. You may now shoulder the kingly responsibilities without any fear and thereby fulfil your father's promise and Visvamitra's request.

Valmiki: It was now noon and so the assembly began to disperse after taking leave of one another and went towards their respective homes to attend to their daily duties. Dasaratha gave leave to every one individually and bestowed gifts on them according to their station in life.

When, on the next day, the assembly met again and there was deep silence, Rama spoke a few words to the sage Vasishtha. "I have learned from you all that has to be learnt and I cannot even think of any questions to be put to you. But if you can think of anything worth imparting, please be good enough to tell us.

Vasishtha: Rama! you are established in Atma. Find out what you feel within yourself and tell me.

Rama: The sense of duality is shed: I feel no reaction to perceptible things or phenomena. I feel identified with the illumination of intelligence.

Vasishta : Well, let me tell you a few words as desired by you. Sounds and words have no more significance or claim for regard than the sounds made by a flowing brook. Words derive a significance by common consent and usage. Then perception is the light of Intelligence. So the world phenomena are nothing but these illuminating rays. The objects of perception are therefore no better than dream phenomena. The very rays take the form of the objects when thoughts of such objects arise. The act of knowing is therefore merely a percept and the objects of perception cannot therefore be different from the act of knowing. Hence all the three worlds exist only as pure percepts.

Rama : How do we get to know about a mountain or river, Tejas, activity, time, Sunyam, etc?

Vasishta : You had better think for yourself and tell me how they are experienced in dreams.

Rama : Atma is akasic in nature and the world phenomenon which is perceived in it cannot therefore be endowed with form and substance and so is no better than dream phenomenon. The appearances as world phenomena arise out of the Chith when it is in an active state giving rise to time, space etc. But in truth none of these exists. The expanding universe is really an expansion of percepts of such phenomena. What really exists is a vast all-pervading Chith or Intelligence which gives rise to all these phenomenal appearances, which become endowed with form and substance by our defective vision. There is no particular root cause for the rise of these

various phenomena. What arose spontaneously one after another in succession have assumed an air of permanency. In reality, nothing is ever created nor destroyed. All these objects of the world can be said to be the dreams of Chith.

Vasishta : What we see in our dreams are mere appearances and there is no substance having physical form in them although seen by us. The Chith sees itself as multifarious things. And then in our waking state, although we seem to see form and substance, they are also like dreams for Chith. When wisdom is attained by us, we would realise that we also have the same experience. And so in reality, there is no form or substance even in the waking state. In short, this world and we are the dreams of Chith and our dreams are dreams within dreams.

Rama : The creations that take place are countless in numbers and they take place in akasa, air and water. I would like to know about them and how this world of ours is situated with respect to them.

Vasishta : Many kinds of creations can be imagined by us. There is no need for another person to tell us about them. Then about this world of ours, we can get a lot of information from our Shastras and Puranas. But let us turn to more profitable subjects.

Rama : How does the Maha-Chith experience the world phenomena? What is the proof for that? Then what is "Time"?

Vasishta : Whatever the Chith experiences can be none other than Chith itself. Then when there is

no second thing, how can there be an experience. The flowing thing is water, motion is air, sunyam is akasa. In like manner, Chith is this world. There can be no talk of experience or proof or time conceived or anything in fact in relation to Chith which is the one and only thing.

I shall now tell you about something else, which would be instructive. The world appearance is no world, since it is uncaused. We can only talk of Brahman being established in Brahman. Let me narrate a small incident of old.

Once, while I was wandering through the three worlds, I happened to go to Kusa-dwipa. The King of that island, Pragnyapti by name, was a wise and good man who ruled his kingdom well and adorned his city with gold. I went to his palace to see him. He received me well and honoured me. Thereupon we talked about many things and in the course of the conversation he said he had some doubts in some philosophical matters and that I should be good enough to clear them. His questions were as follows.

Pragnyapti : Our shastras say that there will come a time known as Mahapralaya, when the whole universe will disappear leaving only the Supreme Lord. In that case, how will this universe reappear from that state. But this world phenomena must be appearing always. If we accept this, then the state of Mahapralaya cannot be experienced by all simultaneously, which is against the teachings of the shastras.

(2) An experience must arise in the same way as the preceeding perception. Such experiences arise in our embodied state. How then can the experiences of heaven and hell in some far-off regions be had after death?

(3) Right and wrong are mere mental concepts without form or substance. How then do they affect us with physical bodies? How do good and bad ideas bring about concrete rewards in the shape of money, lands and so forth?

(4) After a person has died, how can his soul obtain the fruits of the death ceremonies performed on his behalf in some remote place like Prayag?

(5) How do gifts and curses affect a person?

Kindly enlighten me on these points.

Vasishta : Oh, King! hear me. I will dispel all your doubts. All our ideas of the world are unreal but yet they appear to us to be real following the nature of our percepts. In course of time such percepts take the form of knowledge and assume an air of permanency, whether the objects of perception be associated with a body or not. In this manner, many names, forms and bodies become associated with knowledge, while it remains undifferentiated. So all these which present varying pictures are knowledge only and not independent entities in themselves. Thus the world phenomena of percepts or knowledge are not different from Brahman. This truth is propounded by me after an exhaustive study of the Vedas and

Shastras, deep reflection over the true nature of the world of objects and their states of existence in the past and the future. It is no use speaking about these truths to those fools who believe that what becomes perceptible to the sense organs are alone real and that percepts are caused by the bodily organs. So, it is the knowledge which is associated with the body that is active and gives rise to world phenomena. Every fool would admit that a dead body does not give rise to perceptions, although all the bodily organs are there. Then, just as you have dream perceptions in yourself, so also does Brahman perceive the world phenomena as a dream within itself. How can these perceptions be different from Brahman? Can our dreams be different from our own ideas? Could they form on the basis of ideas of others? How could there be any room for doubts? Thus all objects of knowledge are knowledge and can have therefore no form or substance. The world is then a product of imagination. This imaginative faculty is known as Virata-Purusha. All phenomenal appearances take the forms imagined previously in Brahman both activity and non-activity are imagined. If we follow the active aspect, it leads up to Mahaprayala state and if we turn to non-active aspect we have the abiding state of Brahman.

In the active state, the world phenomena and one's experiences are all fashioned after one's own ideas. These may arise with or without the body. The experiences of Heaven or Hell arise in this manner. Until Release is obtained, such experiences

will be continually arising according to one's faith and ideas and one cannot free himself from them or their effects.

Then the effect of the pursuit of good or evil and the effect of gifts or curses depends on one's own faith and ideas. Since everyone is rooted in Brahman, his ideas are experienced as real. So one's own ideas and faith will alone account for the results.

Pragnyapti : How is it then that we are unable to perceive what is to happen in the future? Further, how does the world phenomena present the appearance of stability, although its nature is to change continuously?

Vasishta : The activity that takes place in Chidakasa takes the form of ideas and so existence and non-existence are based on these ideas. And all appearances are therefore to be classified as existing or not existing. The activity i.e. imaginative activity of Chith is of momentary duration; so also are ours. They disappear very quickly. But our ideas are associated with time and space and so give rise to ideas such as past, present and future, as well as here and there. But Chith pervades all time and space and since it is not subject to perceptions, ideas of time and space are not formed. When Chith is spoken of in association with imaginative ideas, then these must be considered to rise and disappear momentarily.

Then, ideas of dharma and adharma, good and evil were formed for the orderly progress of society. The results arising from them are dependent on the

extent of faith in such ideas. Since all ideas are based on Chith, it is no wonder that they are experienced as results. Then, our imagination expands little by little, whereas, imaginative ideas of Chith are formed as a whole and are cognised as abiding appearances. If the original ideas had been different, then the world phenomena that would have resulted therefrom would also have been different. Now we all form part of one particular cosmic dream. Our ideas have to be based on these cosmic ideas and cannot override them.

All ideas of dharma, sin, etc. have been devised by us and we voluntarily conform ourselves to them and so, the results are as had been originally determined. To put it more plainly, we form ideas of rules and regulations at first and then we form ideas of getting results out of them. How can the results be otherwise than as previously imagined? If the mind is very pure and free from the sense of duality, then ideas formed in the mind are immediately experienced. But if the mind is not so, then results are obtained only tardily. And if death intervenes in the meanwhile, then we get the experience of the results in the next birth: People experience Heaven and Hell and the results of good and bad deeds only in this manner.

Then we suffer from the false notions of death and birth. It is because of these wrong notions that we seem to experience surprising and unexpected things. In fact, there are no such impediments as death and birth in the life stream. So long as there is any

activity, the flow of the stream is continuous. But if activity is continually being restrained, then the stream empties itself in the ocean of peace.

Pragnyapti : When thousand people contemplate on the moon simultaneously, why does not each one attain a moon at the same time? If a number of people desire to get the same woman as a wife, would they all get her simultaneously? Then how did the eight Vipaschiths become Kings of the seven islands simultaneously while remaining in their own homes?

Vasishta : The moon is not a product of our imagination but that of Chith. We can only attain that which has been our own ideas and not the ideas of others. All the same, everyone of the thousand people who contemplate the moon's rays will enjoy them according to his own ideas. No one will be denied the enjoyment of what has been his intense desire. Then coming to the next question, everyone will get the woman as had been imagined by him.

Then, it is true that the eight Vipaschiths were longing to be lords of the seven islands at the same time. In general, be it noted, the results of gifts, good deeds, tapas, worship and so forth are enjoyed by the mind as ideas. The expectation of rewards for such actions exists as an idea and the results too are likewise. But, owing to the vigour of these perceptive ideas, the results, although subtle in nature, will appear to be experienced in the gross plane. So there is nothing surprising in each man having experiences of his own prior ideas.

Pragnyapti : If this physical body of ours is just an idea of Chith and is made apparent by its illuminating rays, then what obstruction reveals the illumination, since otherwise no perception is possible.

Vasishta : The body is not a real thing; it is just an appearance. The so-called body, which is a product of imagination, exists only as a percept in us. Through what agency or by what means can we establish the gross condition of the body? We are only aware of a percept of grossness, not grossness "per se". And percept itself is subtle, with no form or substance.

In the state of wisdom, all these appearances will vanish. The Gnani considers all objects of the world as appearances of Chith. Object is another name for Brahman. There is no second thing in existence. It is the only abiding Reality.

Oh, King! Your great questions have now been answered, leaving no room for doubt. Now, digest these ideas and follow the path indicated by them. May you live without doubts or sorrow!

Rama : How do the Siddhas, Vidyadharas and others perceive and react to this world and what is beyond it?

Vasishta : These people and others who are seen by night or by day also have certain fixed ideas of their own about the world etc. and wallow in their own delusions. Their world too is as much a product of imagination as ours. They devote their energies in learning the art of flying in space and acquire the

power. Further, they devote themselves to contemplation with great enthusiasm and experience the objects of contemplation. When the contemplation is over, they suffer great mental anguish, since they cannot indulge in physical activities.

Brahman may be likened to a vast void and it is never subject to any change from this state. Nothing ever takes place in it. What we perceive and experience are our own delusions, i.e. mere empty phenomena but, as they appear in Brahman, they cannot be different from Brahman. When this vast and unlimited Brahman is imagined as circumscribed by limitations, then rises the "I" phenomenon. The world is nothing but the expansion of the "I" idea. It is this phenomenal appearance that can be said to be alive.

Rama : Why does this activity take place at all?

Vasishta : Really no such activity ever take place. Only in the state of ignorance such an activity seems to take place. Such an explanation is given to ignorant people to make them understand the truth. And it is not possible to explain it in any other way. Brahman always remains as Brahman. All words fail to explain Brahman as it is beyond words. When knowledge is gained, all appearances vanish. So, as far as it concerns gnanis, all shastras, Vedas etc. are meaningless, since they are only strings of words outside the province of Reality. They are useful only to the ignorant for bettering themselves. The Gnani observes the "great silence".

Rama : How did this "I" idea expand to the proportions of this mighty universe?

vasishta : The rise of the "I" consciousness is attendant with the sense of duality which gives rise to perception which immediately senses "time-place" phenomena. It is no surprise then if these conjointly give rise to this world phenomena.

Once before, in the previous cycle of 4 yugas, I explained the very same thing to you in the following manner :—

Your question : At the end of the Maha-Kalpa what are the things that are destroyed and what is left behind without being destroyed?

My answer : Oh, Disciple ! Hear me ! Just as the city, mountains, rivers, men etc. of the dream disappear in the following state of sleep, so also all objects of perception like this world, time, space, activity likewise dissolve, so also cause-effect relationship. Even the name disappears. What exists as a vast void is the only Entity namely, the all-pervading Chidakasa.

Disciple : What does not exist cannot become an object of perception. What exists cannot be destroyed. How then can the world of our experience be subject to dissolution?

Guru : What you say is perfectly correct. But the world of our experience was never created with the qualities attributed to them. Their abiding state is non-existence. Although the mirage is seen by us, it

does not exist in fact. Similarly, what we see externally are our mental delusions. Just as the sleep and dream states arise alternately every day of our lives, so also do the world-perceptions and their dissolution constantly arise in us. We cannot say where-in is the dream lost. The dissolution of the world is not different from it.

Disciple : What is it that is said to be the appearance? What is it that is said to disappear?

Guru : What exists is only the Chidakasa. The spontaneous activity that takes place in it appears as world phenomena. This Chidakasa presents a two-fold appearance viz: Repose and Activity. Repose is Brahman and Activity is world-phenomena. Activity is called creation and repose is dissolution, like light and darkness being the two-fold appearance of one and the same akasa, like dream and sleep being the two-fold appearance of one and the same Chith. Just as the various limbs of the body are taken to be one with the body, so also should the world phenomena be considered one with Chith.

Disciple : As there is an entity in the dream which experiences the dream objects, so also should there be world phenomena and an experiencing subject.

Guru : The Chith does at no time suffer any change. The two-fold appearance spoken of above is dependent on the state of the observer and not that of the Chith. For those who view it from the standpoint of creation it presents the appearance of creative

activity and to those who are rooted in repose it presents the appearance of dissolution. But all these divergent views and the persons holding these views are themselves also Chith. For purposes of explanation, it is invested with the two-fold aspect. But the two states do not arise simultaneously but alternately.

Valmiki : The great sage concluded his discourses thus. The entire assembly was lost in admiration of the revered sage and then were at perfect peace. They worshipped him with flowers. The heavenly hosts likewise rained flowers on him. When the members of the assembly had resumed their seats, Dasaratha spoke to the Maharishi.

Dasaratha : I feel I have crossed the Ocean of Samsara and I am in perfect repose now. The purpose of activity or works, the relationship between the knower and known and the equanimity of mind that results from such Knowledge, the illusory experiences resulting from dhyana, the world phenomena that is a result of imaginative activity, the external world being a reflection of one's own self like the dream objects and the dreamer and that these are two aspects of one and the same 'Atma', have all been understood by me.

Rama : By your grace and discourses, I have freed myself from all delusions relating to the world of perceptions and I have realised that I am Brahman. Hearing your discourses is like drinking nectar. Whenever I think of them, I become fearless and free from pain and sorrow and am at perfect peace. I have now neither desire nor aversion towards activity or

duties. I shall do whatever comes to me unsought and be content. I do not make any distinction between friends or relatives, enemies or good or bad men. All this has been gained by me by your grace.

Lakshmana : It is my good fortune, accumulated over several births, that gave me the opportunity to hear your discourses on gnana. By hearing these discourses, the doubts accumulated through thousands of births have been dispelled and my mind is now like an unspotted Moon.

Visvamitra : The benefit obtained by me by hearing your discourses is greater than that attained by bathing in thousand rivers like Ganga.

Narada : I have not heard such complete and perfect discourses in all the three worlds. I am blessed by having heard them.

Satrugna : I have now become established in perfect equanimity and feel having obtained all kinds of wealth to my heart's desire.

Dasaratha : The good deeds of thousands of births have given me this opportunity to hear your great discourses.

Valmiki : The assembly was in rapt silence, absorbed in looking at the great sage. Vasishta seemed to indicate to Dasaratha that the auspicious occasion should be celebrated. Accordingly celebrations were held for seven days. The Brahmins were fed sumptuously and were rewarded with gifts. Then the others including the servants were similarly fed and rewarded.

Oh, Bharadwaja! Rama and his descendants learned the great truth of the identity of the knower and known from these discourses and freed themselves from bondage. May you likewise become a Jivan-Mukhta by overcoming desire and aversion, by keeping away from contact with objects and ideas and doing only that which comes unsought. When those of royal families could become Jivan Mukhtas, it is not difficult for one full of satwa and discrimination like you to become a Jivan Mukhta. Even a young boy who hears these discourses would become wiser. Even fools steeped in bondage would be profited by hearing them. In whichever country this samhita reaches the people, whether by way of discourses or in the shape of books, that country will really be blessed. Just like one, however poor he may be, obtaining the grace of the goddess Lakshmi at least after 3 births, so also would everyone, who hears these discourses, would obtain Release at least after 3 births. To read this work once completely is equivalent to performing one Rajasuya yaga.

Oh, Arishtanemi! these were the discourses that were told by me to Bharadwaja. And now you have also heard them. What is to be known and what is at the root of knowledge is now known to you. May you then attain that state and remain steadfast in it!

Arishtanemi : Lord! I am now freed from the thralldom of perception and have grown wise.

The Messenger of Indra : Lady! After saying these words, the royal rishi Arishtanemi turned towards me and said : "I am beholden to you and your

master Indra for having enabled me to hear these great discourses on the path of wisdom. I do not wish for anything more hereafter." You have also now heard the discourses. I have told you the essence of gnana. I also feel like having partaken of amritha (nectar). I shall now take leave of you.

Apsaras : Oh, messenger of the Gods! I bow to you for having imparted to me the great path of wisdom. I have learned about the essence of gnana. I have freed myself from sorrow, fear and doubt. You may now go your way. Once again my obeisances.

Agnivesya : Oh, Karunya! This apsaras, by name Suruchi, thereafter was ever thinking about and revolving in her mind what she had heard from Indra's messenger. She went over and lived on the slopes of Himalayas in Ghandamadana forest. I have now told you the great discourses of Vasishtha heard by the apsaras. You may now conduct yourself as you please.

Karunyan : This samsara or worldly life is composed of perception, memory and ideas expressed in words and is no more than dream phenomena or like a mirage. These truths are firmly implanted in my mind. So hereafter, I shall indulge only in such activity as comes unsought.

Agasthya thus concluded his talks to Sutheekshna and wound up by saying that to obtain Release one must pursue both the paths of karma and gnana but the karma must be such as comes unsought. He said that he may now do what he considered best. After

the sage stopped talking, Sutheekshna made his obeisances to the Guru and gave expression to his gratitude in this manner.

Sutheekshna : I am now completely freed from ignorance and I feel that I am just a witness of all the activities that are going on. In all the activity going on in this vast universe, the all-pervasiveness of the Chith alone is noticeable, like the gold that pervades all the ornaments made of gold. All that is perceptible to the senses are waves in the Ocean of Truth, like the waves on the surface of water and so all that are revealed by perception are verily the one and only substantial Truth.

So I shall hereafter pursue only such activity as comes unsought. By your grace I have learnt all that has to be learnt. I am not in a position to discharge my debt to you, as a Guru, in any other way than by prostrating myself at your feet and I discharge it accordingly. My mind now is as empty as the Akasa.

I now make my obeisances to that great and worthy Guru of all Gurus, Vasishta, who is ever rooted in the Bliss of Brahman, who shines as the guiding star of wisdom; freed from the thralldom of perceptions and the enslaving idea of subject-object relationship and who is ever steadfast as the One all-pervading, abiding Being, the sole Witness.

ERRATA

	Page	Line	Read	For
19	22	9	jiva	jive
20	23	12	state	states
21	23	13	or	and
22	25	21	all times?	all times.
23	25	30	perceived	perceived
24	29	13	pepper	the pepper
25	30	15	by its rays	by his rays
26	30	23	effect	effects
27	31	5	so also the	so also do the
28	36	28	population	the population
29	39	24	formless	form less
30	39	24	until	untill
31	46	26	people's	peple's
32	47	2	own	owh
33	47	11	lesser	much less
34	47	12	pervading,	pervading
35	48	12	routine	routing
36	53	20	he	He
37	58	14	uninformed	uninformed
38	59	27	would	wold
39	64	6	country	countries
40	64	20	and	and and
41	68	14	became	become
42	67	26	perceptions	perceptions
43	69	6 & 7	characteristic	characteristics
44	73	20	water	whater
45	74	9	and	ande
46	75	9	activities	activitias
47	75	22	imagination?	imagination
48	75	23	know it,	know it
49	75	25	it will be	it will
50	76	1	man	men

	Page	Line	Read	For
51	76	30	distaste for	distaste to
52	77	7	wisdom ;	wisdom,
53	79	2	Kumbhan	Kumbhan
54	79	27	succumbed	succumbs
55	81	4	central	central
56	81	15	shape, also	shape and
57	83	3	interest	interest
58	83	23	after day ?	after day.
59	88	1	deceive	cheat
60	89	19	that being	it
61	93	16	admit its	admit of its
62	106	10	as	so
63	106	26	be man	be as man
64	109	14	obeisance	obeisances
65	111	5	conclusion	conclusions
66	111	17	do	do
67	113	10	given	give
68	113	30	result	results
69	114	2	ideas	idea
70	115	1	dislikes,	dislikes
71	115	15	Brahman	Brahman
72	117	27	cannot be	can be not
73	119	13	forsake	forsake,
74	119	15	people,	people.
75	130	23	performed,	performed
76	130	32	was Rama	Rama was
77	135	26	is	is is
78	137	31	arose	aroses
79	142	6	to fan,	to fan
80	143	23	imperturbable	unperturbable
81	144	9	death ?	death
82	145	12	effort	efforts
83	148	16	waking	walking
84	152	6	phenomenon	phenomenon

	Page	Line	Read	For
		6	itself	itself
85	153	18	stern	stem
86	159	22	asleep	a sleep
87	159	28	perception ?	perception.
88	161	30	disappearance ?	disappearance.
89	163	21	significance	significances
90	165	21	is	are
91	169	28	state	state,
92	169	25	constitute	constitutes
93	170	25	phenomena are	phenomena is
94	171	11	or identical.	that they are
95	171	23	we do,	we do [identical
96	172	12	understood	understood
97	174	25	experienced	experienced
98	175	15	perceptive	preceptive
99	175	19	assumed	assumed
100	176	2	beings	beings
101	177	1	sculptured	sculptured
102	178	14	air,	air
103	181	20	obeisance	obeisances
104	186	8	only pain	only pain now.
105	187	25	any tricks	any of tricks
106	189	13	created	creates
107	195	10	different	different
108	195	10	wherefrom	where from
109	195	28	fashioned ?	fashioned.
110	196	29	dreams [tions	dreams [ptions
111	196	30	sense percep-	sense of percep-
112	197	16	If their views	It their view
113	199	24	thereafter	therefactor
114	203	18	she	she
115	203	23	of them.	of them
116	205	4	Sagaran	Sagaram
117	227	1		

	Page	line	Read	For
118	227	7	appear ?	appear.
119	228	16	and	and
120	33	23	born	borne
121	234	11	filth	faith
122	234	12	hearts	heart
123	237	1	it	tt
124	240	3	illusions ?	illusions.
125	240	16	manner ?	manner.
126	240	28	into	on
127	251	18	waking,	waking
128	251	27	than a city	that a city
129	253	4	Thus ;	Thus
130	255	2	Profitted	Profitted
131	260	5	depends upon	depends on
132	262	7	entities	entites [up]
133	263	29	there after	therereafter
134	265	19	existence	alone existance
135	266	17	betook	be took
136	267	3	Vidhyadaras	Vidhyadaras
137	268	20	" Chi h "	" Chith "
138	270	6	about	a about
139	272	6	addiction	addition
140	273	7	dreams he	dream she
141	274	3	homogeneous	homogenous
142	275	6	undergo	undergoes
143	276	2	Nature	nature
144	279	1	real,	real.
145	281	15	not Release	not for Release
146	289	7	My Companion,	My Companion
147	290	31	another.	another
148	291	16	them.	them
149	"	17	tapas.	tapas
150	"	29	homes.	homes
151	292	11	Countless	Countless

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

(1) பேரவாஸிஷ்டம் (அல்லது மகாராமாயணம்) தமிழ் : முதல் ஐந்து பிரகரணங்கள்.

(2) கதைக்கல் தமிழ் : Press opinions.

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- (3) **Population Control—How?** in English.
 (4) **The Stream of Life**—in English.

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